MARVEL

THE 8 DEATHS OF SPIDER-MAN

KELLY
IRELAND
McGUINNESS
MELNIKOV
BROCCARDO

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

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PETER PARKER HAS THE PROPORTIONAL SPEED, STRENGTH, AND AGILITY OF A SPIDER, ADHESIVE FINGERTIPS AND TOES, AND THE UNIQUE PRECOGNITIVE AWARENESS OF DANGER CALLED **"SPIDER-SENSE"**! AFTER THE TRAGIC DEATH OF HIS **UNCLE BEN**, PETER PARKER UNDERSTOOD THAT WITH GREAT POWER THERE MUST ALSO COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY. HE BECAME THE CRIMEFIGHTING SUPER HERO CALLED...

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

THE 8 DEATHS OF SPIDER-MAN

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"SO, HERE'S WHAT YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND... SCIENCE EXPLAINS *EVERYTHING.*

"EVEN THE THINGS WE DON'T UNDERSTAND *YET.*

INCARNATION OF INERTIA! PARAGON OF PERSISTENCE!

THE CURRENTS OF CHANGE CHALLENGE YOUR DOMAIN AND DEMAND YOUR ATTENTION!

KHONSHU WILL NOT BE DENIED!

WAXING MOON

BOINK

CYTTORAK!

RAMPAGER! CRIMSON DESTROYER...

THE MOON RISES IN YOUR FETID REALM ONCE MORE AS OUR ACCOUNTS REMAIN UNSETTLED.

"CELESTIAL BODIES, EVEN THE REALLY BIG ONES LIKE *THE MOON*, OBEY CERTAIN *LAWS*.

"THOSE LAWS EXPLAIN HOW THINGS WORK IN THE WORLD.

IGNORE A FELLOW GOD AT YOUR OWN PERIL, CYTTORAK...OR DOES YOUR SILENCE BELIE YOUR GUILT?

HEH. NO... WOULD THAT IT WERE SO SIMPLE A THING BETWEEN US AS TO BE RESOLVED WITH LESS THAN A WHISPER.

EVEN THOUGH WE ARE HEWN FROM THE SAME UMBRAL CLOTH... I AM BENEATH YOUR NOTICE.

KRRK KRRT

PERHAPS AN EYE FULL OF KHOPESH CARVED FROM THE CORPSE HEART OF THE ALL-MOON MOTHER WILL GARNER YOUR ATTENTION!

"BACK IN THE DAY, PEOPLE DIDN'T KNOW ALL THIS SCIENCE STUFF, SO THEY THOUGHT ANYTHING WEIRD WAS BECAUSE OF ANGRY GODS AND MONSTERS...

TINK TINK TINK

"BUT *REALITY* IS MUCH COOLER THAN THAT...AND A LOT SAFER...

FORSAKEN BY MY OWN AND LEFT TO ROT--

WE HAD A PACT!

"PACT"...A MEANINGLESS FALSITY FORGED WITH AN INDIFFERENT PREVARICATOR.

NO WONDER THEY LOST FAITH IN US... *HUMANS*. NO WONDER AT ALL...

WHAT OF YOUR *COVENANT* WITH *THEM*, "GREAT" CYTTORAK?

STEPHEN STRANGE IS A *SHADE*, FELLED BY THE *UNDEAD*...ARE YOU STILL HONORBOUND TO KEEP YOUR PLEDGE TO A *GHOST*? WHAT IF HE FAILS TO REGAIN CORPOREAL FORM...?

"...DESPITE, Y'KNOW... WHAT WE GET UP TO PRETTY MUCH EVERY DAY.

...AND HIS SUCCESSOR IGNORES YOUR TREATIES? WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CRIMSON COSMOS...?

WHAT BECOMES OF YOUR CHILDREN?

AH... SO THE IMMOVABLE CAN BE MOVED.

FAREWELL, CYTTORAK. WE SHALL SPEAK AGAIN IN MORE EQUITABLE SURROUNDINGS.

"I TAKE A LOT OF COMFORT KNOWING THAT THE UNIVERSE TICKS ALONG AS IT'S SUPPOSED TO, REGARDLESS OF THE WHIMS OF SOME MAGIC BOZO."

HOPE THAT HELPS YOU TOO.

TOTALLY... YEAH...SO "BLOOD MOON" IS, LIKE, SCIENCE?

I PROMISE! IT'S JUST A TRICK OF THE LIGHT IN A PARTIAL LUNAR ECLIPSE.

"BLOOD MOON" HAS A NICE RING TO IT, BUT NOTHING'S GOING ON HERE BUT SCIENCE.

BUT, IF IT *WAS* SOMETHING MAGIC...LIKE, *REAL* MAGIC?

IT'S *NOT*--

BUT IF IT *WAS*?

IF IT WAS, *DOCTOR STRANGE* OR CLEA OR WONG OR ONE OF THEIR BIG POWERFUL WIZARDY BUDDIES WOULD DEAL WITH IT.

NOT YOU?

ME?! THE ONLY MAGIC I KNOW IS HOW TO MAKE MY BANK ACCOUNT DISAPPEAR.

SPEAKING OF... YOU GOT MONEY FOR ICE CREAM?

YOU STILL OWE ME FOR LAST TIME!

I'LL GET YOU BACK, PROMISE! I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE, PAL.

QUEENS.
Somewhere on Jackson Avenue...
V-WAAMM
V-WAAMM
RIDE'S OVER
SPEAKING AS AN ARMCHAIR EXPERT ON THE SUBJECT, THERE SEEM TO BE *THREE* KINDS OF *GANGSTERS*...
THE "HIDE MY MONEY IN MY SIGNIFICANT OTHER'S-SLASH-GRANDMA'S MATTRESS" TYPE...
THE "I BUILT A MILITARY-GRADE BUNKER-SLASH-CASINO TO HOUSE MY MILLIONS" TYPE...
AND THE "I TOOK A CRYPTO-BRO'S ONLINE COURSE AND NOW TRADE BILLIONS WITH THE BIG DOGS" TYPE...
BILLIONS WITH A *B*.
P.S. I EAT RAMEN THREE TIMES A WEEK FROM MY THIRD-HAND ARMCHAIR, AND I HAVE ALSO SAVED THE WORLD...BUT I DIGRESS.

THE *NIGHT BANK* IS THE HUB OF MONEY LAUNDERING, INTERNATIONAL ASSET DISTRIBUTION, AND PROBABLY MORE THAN A FEW "ART" NFTs FOR THE TECH-SAVVY CRIMINAL ELEMENT ON THE EAST COAST.

THE BIGGEST BRAINS IN CRIME HAVE UNFETTERED ACCESS TO FINANCIAL MARKETS, BANKS, AND THE BLOCKCHAIN, ALLOWING INSTANTANEOUS FINANCIAL SHENANIGANS AROUND THE WORLD.

SO LONG AS IT'S BEING USED BY GREEDY CRIME LORDS, IT'S JUST ANOTHER CORNERSTONE OF THE WORLD ECONOMY--ALL HAIL CAPITALISM.

"THERE ARE SUPERIOR CANDIDATES.

"STEVE ROGERS. THOR. T'CHALLA--

"SELF-RIGHTEOUS. NOT OF EARTH. NOT *ON* EARTH.

"STILL, THERE ARE SCORES OF SELF-PROCLAIMED 'HEROES' TO CHOOSE FROM.

BUT TODAY'S REGULARLY SCHEDULED FISCAL IMPROPRIETY WAS INTERRUPTED BY--

--HOLD ON, I HAVE TO GET THIS RIGHT...

A *"NEWFUANARCHOBARTERIST"...?*

EEW. I CAN'T EVEN...

IT'S *OVERRIDE.* JUST...

IT'S OVERRIDE.

"STRONGER. FASTER...

"...LESS VERBOSE.

"HOWEVER...THOUGH HE DOES PRATTLE LIKE A FRIGHTENED CALF...

APPARENTLY, OVERRIDE WANTS TO ***DESTABILIZE*** THE WORLD FINANCIAL SYSTEM SO HE CAN CONTROL IT...

...AND FROM THE NIGHT BANK, I THINK HE CAN ACTUALLY ***DO*** IT.

"...HIS ***INTELLIGENCE*** CANNOT BE DENIED.

WHILE I'D PROBABLY ENJOY WATCHING BILLIONAIRES TRY TO SCORE A BOTTLE OF ***ACQUA DI CRISTALLO*** IN A MONEY-FREE WORLD...

"SOME CALL HIM A '***GENIUS***'-- SO LONG AS HE MAINTAINS FOCUS--

...OVERRIDING THEIR ACCOUNTS MEANS ***BILLIONS OF NORMAL PEOPLE*** GETTING GUTTED AS WELL.

"--WHICH HE ***DOES***... WHEN THE WELFARE OF THE 'INNOCENT' IS AT STAKE.

"THIS MAN HAS PROVEN TIME AND AGAIN HIS CONVICTION THAT THE NEEDS OF THE ***MANY*** OUTWEIGH HIS ***OWN.***

"DESPITE THE OBJECTIVE IMBALANCE IN PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND RESOURCES, HE ENGAGES ***FAR SUPERIOR*** FOES...

KON

"...OFTEN TO UNHERALDED SUCCESS, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME...

"...***SUFFERING*** GREATLY.

"***GREAT*** SUFFERING WILL BE ***REQUIRED*** IN THE WORKS AHEAD."

PROBLEM IS, OVERRIDE CAN HIJACK *MY* TECH WITH A SNAP OF HIS FINGERS, *THEN* DO WHO-KNOWS-WHAT IF HE GETS A SECOND TO THINK...

KOF!

IDIOT! THIS IS A DELICATE OPERATION! ONE DOESN'T *COUGH* IN THE MIDST OF--

--GREATNESS?

DONT LOOK UP

A SECOND IS A LONG TIME.

WHUMMP

NOT AS LONG AS TWELVE AND A HALF MINUTES...

TIME TO *LOG OFF!* YOU HAVE A BIG DAY IN *PRISON* TOMORROW!

AGGGACHH!

...WHICH IS HOW LONG IT TOOK ME TO DESIGN AND *KITBASH* A MICRO-FIELD ELECTRICAL IMPULSE DISRUPTOR...

...FROM RANDOM EQUIPMENT OVERRIDE OUTFITTED HIS GOONS WITH.

NAILED IT...

OWW.

AND ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD IS SAVED BY YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD RAMEN-MAN.

"ENOUGH. IT IS *DECIDED.*

"IT IS *CORRECT.*"

SPIDER-MAN WILL BE MY *CHAMPION* IN THE *COVENANT.*

HE WILL FIGHT, NOT FOR ME, BUT FOR *THEM.*

HE WILL *SUFFER* FOR THEM.

SPIDER-MAN WILL *DIE* FOR THEM...

...AND *DIE AGAIN...*

...AND AGAIN...

SO SAYS DOOM.

#61 Variant by Gleb Melnikov & Richard Isanove

PARKER24

NO MATTER HOW OPPRESSIVE NEW YORK CITY GETS, ***SOMEONE*** IS OUT HERE HUSTLING LIKE MAD TO BUILD SOMETHING.

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT HOW MANY SMALL BUSINESSES ***FAIL*** EVERY YEAR HERE, IT'S A MIRACLE PEOPLE EVEN TRY.

MOST DAYS, I FIND THAT ***INSPIRATIONAL...***

Peter

SPIDERS

FONY

AAAHH!!

AUNT MAY F.E.A.S.T.

I KNOW WE JUST MET, BUT I NEED YOU TO FOCUS HERE, KEVIN!

...EVEN WHEN SAID SMALL BUSINESS TRIES TO ***BURN ME TO A CRISP.***

WAKE UP DEAD

TODAY, THOUGH, I'M NOT FEELING IT.

TODAY, LIFE IS JUST... STUPID.

THIS LEGALLY-CHALLENGED ENTREPRENEUR NEEDS SOME HELP WITH HIS SUPER-VILLAIN BRANDING, AND WE'RE GONNA GIVE IT TO HIM, KEV!

SO GRAB MY BAG AND ALL ITS PRECIOUS CARGO WHILE I DO THE DODGING AND FIGHTING AND STUFF?

AUNT MAY FE

I TOLD YOU MY NAME, IDIOT! I'M **BURNOUT!**

S-SPARKY?

I LIKE THE LINKAGE, BUT THAT'S A NAME FOR ***PUPPIES***, KEV! BLUE SKY IT!

WHICH IMPLIES SOMEONE WHO'S ***GIVEN UP!*** YOUR CAREER HAS JUST ***BEGUN...?***

I'M ***EXHAUSTED.*** ***THINKING*** MAKES THE INSIDE OF MY SKULL ITCH.

AND EVERYTHING ***HURTS*** ALL THE TIME...

...MOSTLY BECAUSE DIPSTICKS LIKE "***BURNOUT***" ARE SHOOTING ME POINT-BLANK IN THE CHEST WITH HOME-BREWED NAPALM.

YET... I TRY.

YOUR BLASTS ARE CLOSE, BUT NOT QUITE... *LUKEWARM?* NAH...

GOOD CATCH, KEVIN.

TH-THANKS...?

I EXPLORE NON-PUNCHING INTERESTS WITH FRIENDS...

AND... PETER PARKER, *PHOTOGRAPHER,* IS ENTERED INTO HIS FIRST GALLERY SHOW!

I GET TEN PERCENT AS YOUR AGENT--

THANKS, *RANDY...*

THINK I LOST MY WALLET...

WHAT ABOUT THE *HOTNESS! CHAR-MAGEDDON!*

THAT'S PROBABLY A POKEMON...

GOT THE VINYL!

DATING AS BEST I CAN...

GOING FOR A RECORD IN THE RECORD STORE...

NINETY-FIVE MINUTES AND YOU HAVEN'T RUN OFF.

HEH... I...

SHAY, HAVE YOU SEEN MY PHONE?

WHOO-HOO! GOT IT!

KEVIN, YOU ARE THE KING!

OOH! ***KELVINATOR*** IS SCIENCY!

INFLAMMABLE? ADJECTIVE NAMES ARE VERY POST-MODERN--

SHUTUP, SHUTUP, SHUTUP!

AND, OF COURSE, *AUNT MAY...*

YOU'RE SURE YOU CAN DEPOSIT THIS *TO-DAY?* F.E.A.S.T. NEEDS TO CLEAR CHECKS FOR THE SHARE-A-DAY--

AUNT MAY F.E.A.S.T.

TOTALLY, ON IT, MAY...

AUNT MAY F.E.A.S.T.

...AS SOON AS I FIND MY *KEYS.*

KEEPING IT ALL TOGETHER IS *HARD*, Y'KNOW?

I GOT IT! I GOT IT *ALL*! WHAT NOW?!

NOW WE EXTINGUISH THE NAMELESS WONDER AND GET ON WITH OUR LIVES.

FIRE... BIRD?

THAT'S TAKEN.

THEN, SOME ILL-THOUGHT "VILLAIN" APPEARS, AND...

YWASHH

...AND TURNS INTO A FLOCK OF BIRDS.

OF *COURSE* HE DOES.

YOU HIT HIM SO HARD HE *BIRD-ST?*

NO.

ALSO, NICE *SCOTT PILGRIM* REF.

FAMILY FAVORITE.

SPIDER-MAN.

YOUR MEAGER SERVICES ARE REQUIRED...

...AT THE SUMMONS OF EARTH'S *SORCERER SUPREME.*

DOOM.

THE DICTATOR OF LATVERIA GOT A MAGICAL *GLOW-UP* WHEN HE TRICKED *DOCTOR STRANGE* INTO PASSING HIM THE MANTLE OF SORCERER SUPREME.

MAKES MY SKIN CRAWL, BUT THERE'S NOT A THING *ANYONE* CAN DO ABOUT IT.

AHHHHH!

AGREED, KEVIN. SEEING HIM POP UP LIKE THIS MAKES MY BLADDER CLENCH...

...IT ALSO MAKES ME *MAD.*

YOU DIDN'T FORGET **BLOOD HUNT** ALREADY, DID YOU?!? --NEVER-FORGET NICK!

TH-THAT'S *DOCTOR FREAKIN' DOOM*--

YES, IT *FREAKIN'* IS.

TAKE THE REST OF THE DAY OFF, KEVIN. GREAT WORKING WITH YOU.

MY DUDE. ONE JOB. *SIGH*

BREAK!

INEFFICIENT. UNFOCUSED. *IMMATURE*...

YOU RARELY GARNER DOOM'S ATTENTION, *SPIDER-MAN*, BUT NOW THAT YOU *HAVE*...

..."*DISAPPOINTING*" IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT.

NOT THE WORST THING I'LL BE CALLED TODAY, I'M SURE.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

IN MY MAGNANIMITY, I HAVE CHOSEN *YOU* FOR A MATTER OF IMPORT.

A TASK FOR WHICH YOU ARE *UNIQUELY* SUITED.

A TASK AT WHICH YOU *MUST* PREVAIL.

THO

YOUR STUNNED SILENCE BELIES UNDERSTANDING OF THE *GRAVITY* OF--

NO, SORRY...I WAS TRYING TO COME UP WITH AN ELOQUENT WAY TO TELL YOU TO *SHOVE IT* SINCE YOU USED "MAGNANIMITY" CORRECTLY IN A SENTENCE, BUT...

GET RUSTED, YOU TEMU DR. STRANGE KNOCKOFF.

YOU DARE... *DEFY* THE *WORD* OF DOOM?

PRETTY MUCH, YEAH.

I CAN ADD SOME SWEAR WORDS IF THAT'LL MAKE IT MORE CONCRETE.

THEN... *THE COVENANT* SHALL BE BROKEN.

OKAY... THAT...

...THAT WAS SHOCKINGLY EASY.

"COVENANT"...?

NOW I HAVE TO DEAL WITH BURNOUT BIRDS?! THANKS A LOT, JERK-TER DOOM.

BURNOUT!

BURNOUT!

BURNOUT!

BURNOUT!

SIGH BACK TO WORK.

OH, *BIRD-OUT!!!* THAT COULD WORK!

I TRY TO IGNORE THE FACT THAT I STOOD UP TO ONE OF THE *SCARIEST* HUMANS ON THE PLANET...

...AND MOVE ON TO A DIFFERENT KIND OF TERROR.

IN THE WIN COLUMN, *MOST* OF THE F.E.A.S.T. MONEY MADE IT INTO THE ACCOUNT...

YOU NEVER THINK OF HOW HOT A STREET PRETZEL GETS. AND THEN *WHOOSH!*

A *PRETZEL.*

CRAZY, RIGHT?

I'M SORRY, AUNT MAY. I *PROMISE* I'LL MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE--

BY BORROWING MONEY FROM ME?

I GET PAID NEXT WEEK.

ALSO, *OUCH.*

SIGH PETER...

WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GET IT TOGETHER?

WHICH *"IT"* SPECIFICALLY?

YOUR *LIFE?*

I--

KNOCK KNOCK!

CAUGHT A BEAUTIFUL STALKER IN THE HALLWAY--

SEARCHING FOR MY *LUNCH DATE,* WHO WAS NOT AT SAID LUNCH *SPOT.*

SOMEONE GOOFED THEIR CALENDAR. I WAS HAVING A *WORKING LUNCH* WITH MY *CLIENT...*

AND I... FIGURED WE COULD DO *BOTH* BECAUSE I DID *NOT* FORGET AT ALL!

HE *DID.* WE JUST ATE.

WE *DID...*BUT EVERYONE GETS CONSOLATION PRIZES!

COPIES OF MY...
...PHOTOS...
HEH... SO *FIRE* THEY MELTED...
"STREET PRETZEL."
AND A LIMITED-EDITION... OH.
OH.
COOL. WAS IT EXPENSIVE?
NOT IF YOU HAVE MONEY. *Heh.*
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, I'M *UH*... ***BATHROOM.***
...
YOU BOTH KNOW "BATHROOM" IS PETER PARKER FOR "RUNNING AWAY FROM AN UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION"?
ONE TIME, HE FORGOT THE RENT CHECK AND WENT TO THE BATHROOM FOR TWO WEEKS.
I THOUGHT HE HAD AN ***ACTUAL G.I. PROBLEM***...THEN I REALIZED HE'S JUST FULL OF CRAP.
I LIKE YOU, SHAY.
EVERYTHING'S SO IMPORTANT THAT ***NOTHING*** MATTERS...
PETER CAN'T HAVE A LIFE IF ***SPIDEY'S*** STOPPING CRIMES.
WHO IS ***SPIDER-MAN*** IF ***PETER*** GETS ANY WINS?
CAN YOU TRUST THE NEWS ANYMORE WHEN ***A.I.*** IS AVAILABLE ON ***PHONES?***
WHAT'S A COVENANT?!
IS THIS, LIKE, A ***TEST?***

I THOUGHT WE WERE JUST *TRAINING.*

...

SO, *NO* THOUGHTS ON MY EXISTENTIAL CRISIS?

I'M *TEN.*

I'M PRETTY *DESPERATE.*

ELEKTRO

I FIND *ICE CREAM* MAKES PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING BETTER...

...EXCEPT *DIABETES.*

WISE BEYOND YOUR YEARS, SPIDER-BOY--

B

OOH! *ACTION?!*

MMmm... THAT BOOM WAS A SEVEN OR AN EIGHT ON THE *SPIDER-SCALE...*

YOU'RE A LEVEL *THREE,* PAL. SORRY.

ICE CREAM LATER! *I PROMISE!*

I'M LEVEL *FOUR!*

AND YOU *OWE* ME FOR *LAST* WEEK!

BY THE WILL OF MY FATHER, THE *IMMOVABLE*, THE *UNSTOPPABLE*, I DECLARE THIS CONTEST *BEGUN!*

CYNTROS WILL NOT BE DENIED!

WHOOMP!

WHERE IS EARTH'S *CHAMPION--* *Er?*

SPLATT

SORRY! HE CALLED IN SICK TODAY...

...BUT *EARTH'S PUNCHING BAG* IS HAPPY TO HELP WITH ALL YOUR SPEED-NAPPING NEEDS.

THUD!

OW.

THAT'S SOME ARMORED HIDE, *UGLY!* OFF THE RACK OR INSTA-AD?

WHAMMP!

BEGONE, FLECK OF SPITTLE!

MATTERS THAT SHAKE THE HEAVENS ARE *BEYOND* YOU!

THE *COVENANT* IS BEGUN! EARTH'S CHAMPION WILL FACE ME OR--

OR =HNNGH= WE COULD DISCUSS THE RELAXING ZEN OF GARDENING.

WAVES OF POWER ARE *INSTANTANEOUS.* DON'T EVEN WANT TO *THINK* IT, BUT IT FEELS LIKE THE GUY'S MANIPULATING *GRAVITY...*

WHAM

???

INSECT.

TECHNICALLY, A SPIDER IS NOT--

DID YOU SAY "*COVENANT*"?

OH BOY.

DEFINITELY *GRAVITY.* MOVING IN CONCENTRIC CIRCLES...

A FEW DOZEN MORE FEET...

...BUILDINGS START *FALLING.*

WHAMM!

WHAT IS THIS GUY?

THIS IS THE TASK YOU WERE GIFTED.

WAIT--WHAT?! *THAT?!* THAT'S *LITERALLY GRAVITY* BEING USED AS A WEAPON!

ANY WHO PERISH FALL VICTIM TO *YOUR NEGLIGENCE.* ACCEPT MY TASK, RECEIVE MY AID--

YES!

I ACCEPT! I ACCEPT!

OF COURSE YOU DO. DOOM *WILLS* IT.

NOW, PAY ATTENTION FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE!

"FROM THE *DARKHOLD* CHRONICLES: *AGE OF STRANGE*...

"THE YOUNG SORCERER SUPREME EXPLORED THE LENGTHS AND DEPTHS OF HIS MAGNIFICENCE...

"...AND WHILE THEIR POTENTIAL INSPIRED *AWE*, HE QUICKLY DISCOVERED THE LIMITS OF HIS *HUMAN POWER*.

"IN ORDER TO GUARD THE EARTH AND ITS ENVIRONS FROM THE *COUNTLESS* THREATS OF THE IMMATERIAL COSMOS, HE WOULD REQUIRE *AID*.

"*BARGAINS WOULD BE STRUCK*.

"DOOM WOULD NEVER HAVE REQUIRED SUCH UNRELIABLE AND INEFFICIENT SYSTEMS, BUT WE PLAY THE HANDS WE ARE DEALT...

"WHILE STUDYING THE ELDRITCH HISTORIES OF THE DARKHOLD, STRANGE DISCOVERED THE UNASSAILABLE *CRIMSON CASKET OF CYTTORAK*.

"*AMPLE* PROTECTION FOR THE EARTH--FOR THIS *DIMENSION*! HOWEVER...

"...THE CRIMSON GOD *CYTTORAK* IS GENERALLY *IMMOVABLE* IN BODY AND MIND, AS IS WELL KNOWN.

"STRANGE, NOTHING IF NOT CLEVER, ENTERED INTO A PARLEY WITH THE GOD IN ORDER TO SWAY HIM TOWARD A PACT.

"EVENTUALLY, A *COVENANT* WAS FORGED... BUT STRANGE QUICKLY LEARNED THAT CLEVERNESS AND INTELLIGENCE ARE *NOT* THE SAME.

"IN EXCHANGE FOR ERECTING THE CASKET AND PROTECTING EARTHREALM, STRANGE HAD TO COMMIT TO BESTING THE ***EIGHT SCIONS OF CYTTORAK***...

"...THE RESTLESS, ***SPOILED***, TERRIBLE GODLINGS EAGER TO PROVE THEMSELVES WORTHY OF THEIR FATHER'S THRONE.

"STRANGE THOUGHT IT A FAIR BARGAIN... BECAUSE HE BELIEVED HE FOUND A LOOPHOLE IN THEIR COSMIC CONTRACT...

"THERE IS ONE RIVALRY THAT PRECEDES THE ***ALL-BIRTH***...CYTTORAK AND ***RAGGADORR***.

"STRANGE ARMED HIMSELF WITH THE SACRED ***REEDS OF RAGGADORR***, WHICH ALL BUT ASSURED THAT SHOULD HE ***FALL*** AT THE HANDS OF THE CRIMSON SCIONS, HE WOULD BE ***REBORN*** AND, THUSLY, ***NEVER*** LOSE.

"THE COVENANT DEMANDS THAT AT THE TOP OF THE CRIMSON CALENDAR, EARTH PUT FORWARD A CHAMPION TO BATTLE THE SCIONS FOR CYTTORAK'S AMUSEMENT.

"THE CONTESTS WERE...***TAXING***... TO SAY THE LEAST...

"YET HE ***PREVAILED***. EVERY TIME THE COVENANT WAS INVOKED, STRANGE ANSWERED AND PAID THE MIGHTY TOLL TO MAINTAIN THE CASKET.

"***EVERY*** TIME.

"THERE IS LITTLE I ADMIRE ABOUT STEPHEN STRANGE, BUT HIS ***TENACITY*** CANNOT GO UNRECOGNIZED.

"BUT ***MY*** TIME IS FAR MORE ***VALUABLE***.

"STRANGE, EVER THE MARTYR, CHOSE TO FACE THE SCIONS ***HIMSELF***... HIS INEFFICIENCIES ALSO KNOW NO BOUNDS.

"THUS, THE NEED HAS ARISEN FOR A ***DIFFERENT*** 'CHAMPION.'

"SOMEONE ***CLEVER*** AND ***TENACIOUS*** WHO IS WILLING TO PUT THE NEEDS OF OTHERS ABOVE THEIR OWN.

"SOMEONE FAMILIAR WITH ***PAIN***."

AS EARTH'S SORCERER SUPREME, I DECLARE ***SPIDER-MAN*** IS EARTH'S NEW ***CHAMPION*** IN THE ***COVENANT OF CYTTORAK.***

YOU WILL FACE THE SCIONS OF CYTTORAK AS MY ***BANNERMAN***, ARMED WITH TOOLS TO AID YOU...

ARCANE ARMOR TO GIVE YOU ACCESS TO THE ***MYSTIC ARTS*** AND PROTECT YOUR PHYSICAL FORM...

...AND ***EIGHT*** OF THE LIFE-RESTORING ***REEDS OF RAGGADORR.***

FACE THE SCIONS.

BEAT THE SCIONS.

PROTECT THE EARTH.

THIS IS THE WORD OF ***DOOM.***

WHOA.

ELOQUENT, I KNOW...BUT AT THE MOMENT, WITH A ***THREAD*** OF THE INFINITE WEAVE OF THE MYSTICAL UNIVERSE COURSING THROUGH MY BODY...

...I'M AT A LOSS.

HEH... ABRACA-FREAKIN'-DABRA.

WICKED WEBS OF WUNDAGORE!

AH. THERE YOU ARE... "CHAMPION."

YOU'RE NEW TO THIS.

WE DON'T CALL OUT ALL OF OUR SPELLS.

Hnnh... NOTED...

I AM CYNTROS. FIRST OF THE SCIONS OF CYTTORAK. IMBUED WITH UNDENIABLE AND INEVITABLE ATTRACTION.

I AM THE WILL THAT SHAPES THE DANCE OF PLANETS... STARS... GALAXIES!

I AM THE *MORTAR* THAT HOLDS THE *UNIVERSE* IN PLACE!

AN INSECT CAN ONLY BE *CRUSHED* IN MY PRESENCE.

AND THE EGOTISTICAL WEIRDO *SLIPS UP.* SHOWS ME THE SOURCE OF HIS POWER...

A *BLACKHEART HOLE.*

THANKS TO THIS SUIT, I KNOW ALL THE *COOL SECRET NAMES* OF THINGS...

...JUST LIKE I KNOW THAT THE *LUMINESCENSE OF LIMITLESS LANGOLIN* CAN NOT ONLY *FILL* A BLACKHEART HOLE...

...IT CAN OVERLOAD AND *DESTROY* IT.

HERE COMES THE MAGICAL CHOO CHOO! *OPEN WIDE!*

BETWEEN US...NORMALLY, I WOULDN'T BE SO CAVALIER ABOUT *HURTLING* MYSELF INTO THE MOUTH OF AN EXTRADIMENSIONAL GODLING...

...BUT I KNOW IN MY GUT THAT THE *REEDS* WILL PROTECT ME. DOOM DIDN'T LIE ABOUT THAT.

I WIN.

"CAUSE OF DEATH...

"THE SCIENTIFIC TERM IS '*SPAGHETTIFICATION,*' WHICH KIND OF TRIVIALIZES WHAT MAY BE ONE OF THE MOST ***RARE*** AND EXCRUCIATING DEATHS IN THE UNIVERSE.

"A BODY IS STRETCHED AND COMPRESSED AS IT'S PULLED INTO THE GRAVITY WELL OF A BLACK HOLE.

"SO ***COOL.***

"I'M SORRY, THAT'S NOT PROFESSIONAL, BUT IT ***IS*** COOL, BECAUSE...

"...THAT TIME BETWEEN THE FIRST RENDING OF ***TOE FLESH*** AND THE LAST COMPRESSION OF ***SCALP*** ATOMS ONLY TAKES PICOSECONDS...

"...BUT FOR THE DECEASED, THE PROCESS FEELS LIKE IT TAKES ***NINETY-SIX HOURS*** THANKS TO SPACE-TIME DISTORTION. WILD, RIGHT?"

SORRY, I'M ***NEW*** AT THIS JOB. AND A LITTLE ***NERVOUS.***

NERVES FOR ME EQUAL GIDDY FOCUS ON FACTOIDS AND ***TRIVIA*** AND... *AHEM*

I USED TO BE CALLED ***PHIL COULSON***...BUT FOR THE PURPOSES OF OUR TIME TOGETHER, ***I AM DEATH.***

MAN, THAT SOUNDS SO HEAVY... BUT IT'S TRUE, SO ***EMBRACE*** IT, PHIL... *AHEM*

AS THE NEW ***EMBODIMENT OF DEATH,*** I AM TO GUIDE YOU SAFELY AND AS FRICTION-FREE AS POSSIBLE TO THE AFTERLIFE OF YOUR CHOICE, MR....?

YOU DIDN'T MISS THIS DEVELOPMENT IN THE RECENT **INFINITY WATCH** EVENT, DID YOU?! -- AKNOWLEDGIN' NICK.

OH MY GOD.

SPIDER-MAN? NO...

I'M ***SO*** SORRY... OH MAN...

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, I JUMPED RIGHT TO CAUSE OF DEATH IN YOUR FILE.

WHATEVER YOUR ***NAME*** WAS... YOU'LL ALWAYS BE ***"SPIDEY"*** TO ME.

IT'S AN ***HONOR*** TO PROCESS YOU--

WHAT'S ***THIS?***

OH. YOU HAVE THE ***REEDS...***

I'M-- I'M ***SO*** SORRY...

STAY ***STRONG,*** SPIDEY.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

LATER, IN THE QUIET OF MY ROOM, THIS MOMENT COMES BACK TO ME AND I RELIVE MY *REBIRTH* ALL OVER AGAIN...

...'CAUSE IN THE MOMENT, IT HURT TOO MUCH TO EVEN *THINK*.

I *DIED*. BODY TORN AND BROKEN AND RENT ON AN ATOMIC LEVEL...

I *RETURNED*. THE REEDS OF RAGGADORR REVERSED THE NATURAL ORDER AND FORCED MY ATOMS TO RE-FORM AND MY MUSCLES TO REKNIT AND MY SOUL TO...

TO I DON'T KNOW WHAT.

NOTHING IN MAGIC COMES WITHOUT COST... THE COST OF DEFYING THE VERY FOUNDATION OF A MORTAL EXISTENCE...

...IS *PAIN*. *INCONCEIVABLE PAIN*.

GOD... OH MY GOD...

...HELP ME...

HELP...

I'VE NEVER BEEN ACCUSED OF HAVING A GOOD BEDSIDE MANNER...

DO PEOPLE WANT THE GOOD NEWS OR THE BAD FIRST--?

DOCTOR STRANGE...

GOOD... PLEASE...

G-GOOD...

YOU'RE ALIVE AND IN PERFECT HEALTH.

BAD NEWS IS YOU HAVE TO FIGHT AND DEFEAT THE REST OF THE *SCIONS OF CYTTORAK*...

...LIKELY *DYING* IN THE PROCESS... *REBIRTHING*...

...*SEVEN MORE TIMES.*

IF YOU DON'T... *THE EARTH FALLS.*

#62 Variant by Gleb Melnikov & Dean White

EMEZKIEL!!
MENKZ

YOU GOT THIS, SPIDER-MAN.

YOU GOT THIS.

THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM OF DOCTOR STRANGE... FORMER SORCERER SUPREME.

SO, YEAH, THIS IS MY LIFE NOW. I USED TO THWIP AND QUIP. TODAY, I SAY THINGS LIKE--

SEMPITERNAL SHIELD OF STRYK'UN'MOHR!

YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG.

ARE YOU SERIOUS RIGHT NOW?!

EVEN AS A FLEDGLING SORCERER, THE SEMPITERNAL SHIELD OF STRYK'UN'MOHR SHOULD MANIFEST IN A RESPLENDENT GOLD RATHER THAN--

BEDSIDE MANNER, DOC!

DOCTOR STEPHEN STRANGE IS MY GO-TO FOR ALL THINGS MAGICAL, AND HE'S GOT A ***GRIMOIRE*** OR ***TOME*** OR ***MAGICAL PHONE BOOK*** THAT CAN HELP ME FIGHT THE SCIONS...

...BUT HE PUT HIS HOME ON MEGA-ULTIMATE MAGICAL LOCKDOWN ONCE ***DOOM*** SCOOPED HIS TITLE.

AND SINCE STRANGE'S ACTUAL BODY IS OFF DOING WHATEVER WHEREVER AND THERE'S NO KEY UNDER THE MAT...WE ***BROKE IN.***

FOR BURGLARS, YOU TWO ARE *VERY LOUD.*

THERE AN EXIT PLAN, BOYS?

BLACK CAT AND I HAVE B&E'd THE SANCTUM BEFORE. SHE'S THE SKILL, I'M THE MYSTIC MUSCLE.

A *PLAN*, YES. IT'S *EXECUTION...?*

"IMPLEMENTATION!" "STAGING!" "COMPLETION!" SO MANY OTHER WORDS, DOC!

IF IT DOESN'T WORK, YOU FALL FOR ETERNITY...

"EXECUTION" IS APT.

NO PRESSURE.

YOU MUST ALIGN MULTIPLE EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL ASPECTS OF A SINGLE OBJECT AT A SINGLE POINT IN TIME...

WONDERFUL WINDOW SMASHER OF *WAH-HOO!*

THAT ISN'T A SPELL.

ALLOW HIM HIS LITTLE JOYS, STRANGE...

AND BE THANKFUL YOU'VE NEVER HEARD SUCH AN EXCLAMATION UNDER *ROMANTIC* CIRCUMSTANCES.

THAT'S... AN IMAGE--?

MOVING ON! LET'S CRACK OPEN THIS MAGIC BOOK!

A quick scan of the table of contents later...

SIZZLE

MAYBE I'M NOT READY FOR THE MAGIC BOOK--

AH, WAS THAT THE "OBSIDIAN OBELISK OF OBVIOUS"?

NOT HELPING, FELICIA...

LOWE

AHEM. I MEAN, I'M NOT READY *YET.*

A POT OF COFFEE AND A LATE-NIGHT CRAM SESSION AND THE *NEXT SCION* WILL TASTE MY *MYSTIC MOJO.*

HE'S GOING TO DIE.

ACCURATE, BUT AGAIN, NOT USEFUL, FELICIA.

ONCE EARTH'S CHAMPION IS NAMED, THEY MUST FULFILL THE COVENANT.

EVEN IF I COULD JOIN YOU, DIRECT INVOLVEMENT AGAINST THE SCIONS VIOLATES THE PACT. MY ASTRAL PROJECTION MUST SUFFICE.

THE SPELLS IN THAT TOME WILL HELP BUT ARE NOT A PANACEA.

WHY IS THIS HIS PROBLEM TO FACE ALONE?

I APPRECIATE THE WORRY, FELICIA, BUT I'M GOOD-- I GOT REEDS!

I WOULD JUST *LOVE* NOT TO USE THEM... EVER AGAIN.

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL...

LIKE I *HOPE* YOU'LL PICK UP THE PHONE ONCE IN A WHILE WHEN YOU *AREN'T* IN A CRISIS.

I DO!

DON'T I?

DID YOU KNOW THAT I'M SINGLE AGAIN?

NO. I'M SORRY--HEY! THERE ARE SOME AMAZING DATING APPS--!

I PRAY THAT YOUR TALENT FOR SAYING THE EXACT WRONG THING AT THE WRONG TIME HELPS SAVE THE WORLD.

YOU'RE *TERRIBLE* WITH WOMEN.

I WASN'T BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE ROMEO.

CAN YOU TELL ME HOW TO WIN NOW?

PETER... THERE'S NO "WINNING."

CYTTORAK KNEW I WAS DESPERATE TO CAST THE CASKET, SO HE RIGGED THE GAME IN HIS FAVOR...

I *RIGGED IT* BACK IN MINE. BUT I HAVE NEVER USED LESS THAN EIGHT REEDS.

...

HOW DID YOU DO THIS? OVER AND OVER AGAIN?

THERE ARE FATES WORTH THAN DEATH, PETER...

WORSE THAN... *DEATHS.*

THE CRIMSON COSMOS...

STRANGE HAS BEEN NEUTERED.

THE HUMAN CALLED "DOOM" IS DISTRACTED.

AN *INSECT* STANDS AS EARTH'S CHAMPION IN THE COVENANT...

IF *NOT NOW*, WHEN DO THE *SCIONS OF CYTTORAK* RISE AND CLAIM THE EARTH IN THEIR FATHER'S NAME?

YOU WOULD BE BETTER SERVED PLANNING YOUR CHALLENGE THAN PUFFING OUT YOUR CHEST, *CALLIX.*

IF CYTTORAK WANTED THE EARTH, HE'D *HAVE IT.*

THE COVENANT IS FATHER'S GIFT TO *US* AND HOW WE WILL PROVE WHO IS WORTHY TO CLAIM HIS THRONE--

--WHO IS *INEVITABLE.*

YOU SOUND LIKE AN ANIMAL WHOSE BACK HAS BEEN BOWED BENEATH THE YOKE OF ITS OWN STUPIDITY, "BROTHER."

ALWAYS PUSHING BOUNDARIES, BROTHER.

WHEN ONE HAS NOTHING BUT ENDLESS TIME AND A RESTLESS TONGUE...

CALLIX IS RIGHT... IF *MISGUIDED.*

YOU ARE ALL CONTENT TO PLAY THE ROLES FATHER SET FOR YOU...ON A STAGE BUILT BY THE *HUMAN,* STRANGE.

MEANINGLESS EFFORTS MASKED AS "DUTY" TO OUR FATHER.

CALLIX, AT LEAST, SEES THIS "COVENANT" FOR THE SHAM IT IS.

GAMES FOR CHILDREN. A ***DISTRACTION.***

YOU TWINS! ONE WHOSE REACH EXCEEDS HIS GRASP AND THE OTHER WHO ASPIRES TO NOTHING!

I HAVE ASPIRATIONS, BROTHER...IT'S HOW I KNOW I AM IMPRISONED.

I ASPIRE TO BE ***FREE.***

SO...*NOM NOM* I'VE SPENT THE LAST TWO DAYS STUDYING ***MAGIC*** SO I CAN *SLURP* ***WIN...***

BECAUSE IF I DON'T... *CHOMP* THAT WOULD SUCK, TO PUT IT MILDLY.

AND WITH THAT, NOM YOU'RE CAUGHT UP ON MY CHAOS...

PLEASE SAY SOMETHING.

PREFERABLY SOMETHING SOLUTION-BASED AND/OR SURPRISINGLY COMFORTING?

Pizza

ener-G

...

I DON'T BELIEVE IN MAGIC.

YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE ASSIGNMENT, NORMAN.

THE BOOK WAS *JUST FLYING. WITH MAGIC--*

WHUMMP

I SHUT DOWN OSCORP. EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY.

APOLOGIES FOR DROPPING THIS ON YOU ***NOW.*** NOT IDEAL, BUT I WANTED TO TELL YOU BEFORE IT HIT THE PRESS.

WHAT?!
DIDN'T YOU THINK IT ODD THAT I CAME TO YOUR APARTMENT UNANNOUNCED...WITH *PIZZA*, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE?
I DID, BUT THEN I SMELLED THE PIZZA AND GOT OVER IT.
OSCORP REPRESENTS SO MANY OF MY MISTAKES... SO MUCH *PAIN*...
TO FULLY EXPLORE THE NEW LEASE ON LIFE THAT *YOU* GAVE ME... I NEED TO START OVER.
THAT'S ALL GOOD, ISN'T IT?
I MEAN, UNLESS YOU'RE A SHAREHOLDER--
SORRY. TOO SOON. IT'S THE PIZZA TALKING.
THEY'LL SURVIVE...BUT BASED ON WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME, *YOU* MAY NOT...
DEATH... EVEN OF A TEMPORARY SORT... HAS A WAY OF DRAINING THE COLOR OUT OF THINGS.
IT DROVE ME *MAD*--
BDEE-T BDEE-T
OHHHHH NO.
NOT PROFOUND ENOUGH FOR YOU?
AUNT MAY. I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE AT F.E.A.S.T. THREE SLICES AGO.
TELL HER YOU CAN'T MAKE IT! YOU HAVE PRESSING MATTERS--
THEN I'D *REALLY* BE DEAD.
I'M SORRY, NORMAN, ABOUT OSCORP... OR CONGRATS ON OSCORP?

PETER, YOU NEED TO--

SORRY, NORMAN! PROMISE I'LL--

SHHWAMP

OH. HI.

THIS ISN'T MY HALLWAY.

CHAMPION. I AM *CYPERION*, SCION OF CYTTORAK.

STRIKE ME ONCE, AND I AM *CONQUERED.*

FAIL, AND THIS REALM *FALLS.*

TELEPORTING SPACE BEETLE. FUN.

WE'RE DOING MAGIC-TAG? GOT IT.

CAN WE RESCHEDULE FOR, LIKE, AN HOUR FROM NOW? I HAVE A THING.

HA! WHAT A CURIOUS LITTLE BUG.

NO.

THEN I'LL MAKE IT SNAPPY!

BENEVOLENT BATTERING OF BALDURAN!

Heh. MY BROTHER ***SAID*** YOU CALL OUT YOUR SPELLS.

CUTE.

YEAH, I'M ADORABLE-- *WHOA!*

EVEN MAGIC FOLLOWS ***RULES AND LAWS.*** FIGURE OUT THE RULES. BREAK DOWN THE PROBLEM VIA THOSE RULES.

WIN.

CYPERION BROUGHT ME TO CITI FIELD--NOT AWESOME FOR SWINGING. WIDE-OPEN SPACE--

--SPACE TO SLICE AND DICE WITH HIS MAGIC SLAP-CHOP--

CORRECTION. CAN TELEPORT ME *WITHOUT* THE SCYTHE... GUESS IT'S JUST FOR SCYTHING.

OH BOY.

INFINITE SPACE IS MY PLAYGROUND.

CLANG

WHAT HE SAID.

SPACE. COOL. JUST HAVE TO REMEMBER EVERYTHING I EVER LEARNED ABOUT THE SPATIAL FRAMEWORK OF THE UNIVERSE IN WHICH WE LIVE...*BUT MAGIC...*

...WHILE BEING THROWN INTO MY FAVORITE TEAM'S JUMBOTRON.

ON IT.

SLAM

YOU WILL NEVER TOUCH ME AS THERE IS ALWAYS AN INFINITELY DIVISIBLE SPACE BETWEEN US...

...AS WELL AS INFINITE SPACES TO WHICH I CAN BANISH YOU.

IN WHOLE...OR *PART.*

I'M BLINDED AS HALVES OF MY SKULL ARE SENT TO DIFFERENT CORNERS OF THE UNIVERSE...

...ALONG WITH OTHER PARTS OF MY BODY THAT I'VE GROWN TO PREFER CLOSE AT HAND.

THE *PAIN* IS...

DON'T DWELL ON IT. IGNORE MY BODY.

AND *HOPE* THAT MY STUDYING HAS PAID OFF.

TENACIOUS THREAD OF THE TETRADIUM.

YOINK! WE JUST MET AND YOU ALREADY WANT TO PUT *SPACE* BETWEEN US?

I THOUGHT WE HAD A CONNECTION-- *LITERALLY!*

THE THREAD KEEPS THE CASTER AND THE TARGET TOGETHER. SIMPLE, EFFECTIVE...

...LIMITED. GOTTA WORK *FAST.*

CLEVER. WHERE I GO, *YOU* GO...

WHAT'S NEXT?

KEEP IT CLOSE AND PERSONAL SO WE CAN GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER.

THE KALEIDOSCOPIC CAGE OF K'UN-LUN WILL CONTAIN YOU TO THIS AREA... I THINK.

IT WILL... STRANGE USED THIS SPELL ON ME THREE OR FOUR CHALLENGES AGO.

HUMANS HAVE SUCH *LIMITED* UNDERSTANDING OF "SPACE" AND ITS INFINITE DIMENSIONS.

CITI FIELD

YOU'RE NOT KIDDING.

INDEED. AT THIS SCALE, I HAVE ALL THE ROOM I REQUIRE TO REND YOU ASUNDER...

...EVEN MORE IF WE ARE AS UNTO *ELECTRONS*.

OH, YOU KNOW ABOUT THOSE?

I AM THE CHILD OF A GOD... I *READ*.

NOTED. THIS AS SMALL AS YOU CAN GO?

HARDLY. YOUR "*QUANTUM-VERSE*"?

SEEN IT. BET YOU CAN'T GO SMALLER...

INFINITELY SMALLER.

I KNEW THE DOME WOULDN'T WORK. STRANGE TOLD ME SO WHEN HE BRIEFED ME ON THE SCIONS.

HE *ALSO* TOLD ME THAT CYPERION DOESN'T THINK ABOUT THE NATURE OF HIS POWER HALF AS MUCH AS I THINK ABOUT THEORETICAL PHYSICS.

THERE'S A MODEL OF SPACE-TIME THAT SUGGESTS THAT IF YOU GOT IN A SPACESHIP AND FLEW STRAIGHT...

...YOU WOULD EVENTUALLY COME BACK TO THE SAME LOCATION. IT WOULD TAKE AN INFINITE AMOUNT OF TIME, BUT YOU *GET* THERE. NOW, BEAR WITH ME...

...I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT THE SAME WOULD BE TRUE WITH *SCALE.*

GO IN ONE DIRECTION... ENLARGING OR, IN OUR CASE, SHRINKING...

YOU'D EVENTUALLY "COME BACK AROUND" TO THE SIZE YOU STARTED.

IT'S JUST A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT...

...NOT THE SORT OF THING ONE COULD EVER TEST...

...UNLESS YOU WERE, LIKE, A MAGIC EGO-MANIAC WHO DIDN'T GET PAST "ELECTRONS" IN THEIR READING.

AND IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING...

YES...IT'S AS TRIPPY AS IT SOUNDS, BEING THE SMALLEST AND BIGGEST THING AT THE SAME TIME...

YES...THERE IS A MOMENTUM TO THIS SCALE SHIFT THAT FORCES CYPERION TO SEE IT THROUGH EVEN AS HE REALIZES HE'S BEEN *PLAYED*...

AND *YES*... IT HURTS.

AAUGHHHHHH!!!

"CAUSE OF DEATH...

"INSTANTANEOUS DISSOLUTION OF YOUR ATOMS THROUGH AN INFINITELY RECURSIVE FOLD OF SPACE...SAY THAT TEN TIMES FAST. *Heh.*

"I'M SORRY, SPIDEY... JOKES KEEP THE TEARS AWAY."

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY, OTHER THAN...

HANG IN THERE, HERO.

MAYBE *THIS* ONE? I DON'T KNOW, I'M NOT AN ARTIST--

BUT YOU HAVE *TASTE*, SHAY! AND ALSO...

...THE "ARTIST" IS A MILLION MILES AWAY.

WHAT? OH...

SORRY, RANDY.

DON'T APOLOGIZE TO ME. AS YOUR FRIEND AND AGENT, I'M USED TO PETER PARKER, SPACE CADET...

YEAH, MAYBE THIS IS A YOU-GUYS THING...? I DON'T WANT TO MESS UP YOUR CREATIVE VIBES OR WHATEVER--

ME AND SPIDER-MAN! SCARIEST AND BEST DAY OF MY LIFE...

OTHER THAN GETTING MARRIED.

OH, *YOU!* I SWEAR, KEVIN!

NO! NO... PLEASE, SHAY.

I'M SORRY. I'M JUST DEALING WITH...STUFF.

JOB HUNTING, DISAPPOINTING AUNT MAY... *AGAIN*...

FEELING LIKE A GRIND THAT'S NOT GETTING BETTER, YOU KNOW?

IT'S OKAY, PETE. I'VE BEEN THERE. *TRUST* ME.

IF YOU CAN'T GET OUT OF IT, GET *INTO* IT, RIGHT?

SURE, THAT'S PART OF IT, BUT...

I MEAN I DISAGREE WITH THE PREMISE.

I ABSOLUTELY BELIEVE IT'S GOING TO GET BETTER.

THAT'S THE WHOLE THING OF *LIFE*, ISN'T IT?

SURE, BAD THINGS HAPPEN, BUT--

SHAY?

OH NO-- ALREADY?!

HEY, MISTER...?

MY TURN TO PLAY.

TUFFY

FOREST HILLS, QUEENS.
The Past.
I CAN'T DO IT!
YES, YOU CAN! COME ON, KIDDO, ONE MORE TRY...
AS LONG AS YOU KEEP PEDALING, YOU'LL GET IT!
YOU'RE DOING IT! YOU'RE DOING IT!
UNCLE BEN!
CRASH
PETER!
I-- WHOA-- AAH!
I TOLD YOU I COULDN'T DO IT!
YOU'RE OKAY, BUDDY. LET'S GET YOU IN THE HOUSE SO AUNT MAY CAN CLEAN YOU UP.
WE CAN TRY AGAIN TOMORROW, PETE. WE HAVE TIME. THE KEY IS TO *NEVER GIVE UP...*
THIS IS THEIR *CHAMPION?*
WE'RE GONNA HAVE SO MUCH FUN!
DING DING

MANHATTAN. *The Present. For Now.*

A LITTLE SCION APPEARS IN FRONT OF ME AND *THIRTY CIVILIANS.* OH, AND MY BEST FRIEND AND...WHATEVER *SHAY* AND I ARE. THIS IS THE LAST THING *ANYONE* NEEDS.

BRIGHT SIDE: AT LEAST SHE SEEMS TO HAVE FROZEN TIME.

CAN WE DO THIS ANOTHER TIME?

SURE! SOUNDS LIKE FUN. *WHEN* DO YOU WANT TO GO?

WHAAAA--?

I KNOW THIS SPELL.

YOU DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD CAST THE *TENACIOUS THREAD OF THE TETRADIUM*, DID YA?

I GUESS I COULD'VE CALLED MY SPELL OUT AS I CAST IT...

I *GET* IT. CALLING OUT SPELLS IS AMATEUR HOUR. NOTED.

OW! NNGH!

SO YOU REPRESENT, WHAT? THE INEVITABILITY OF...BEDTIME?

WAIT, IS THAT MY OLD BIKE?

YEAH, I TOOK IT *FROM A FEW YEARS AGO.*

BUT THAT'S NOT THE *FUN PART.*

DID I MENTION THAT I'M *CYRIOS* AND I'M THE *INEVITABILITY OF TIME?*

IS THAT MY *HOUSE?*

MAY, GET BEHIND ME!

WHAT? *NO!*

THIS FEELS REAL. IT *IS* REAL.

IT'S *THAT* NIGHT.

I CAN *SAVE* UNCLE BEN IF I CAN *GET INSIDE*...

YOINK!

NOT SO FAST!

HNNGH!

IT'S ALL WE HAVE! MAY, GET BEHIND ME.

HEY, MISTER, YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T GO ANYWHERE I DON'T, RIGHT? THAT'S HOW THE SPELL WORKS.

BUT SINCE YOU *REALLY* WANNA SEE... GO AHEAD.

SHE'S MOCKING ME. IF I COULD JUST STOP THAT BULLET...

WE AREN'T *RICH*--PLEASE DON'T--

BLAM

...BUT I CAN'T.

DO YOU GET IT NOW? WE'RE GONNA VISIT *ALL* THE PAIN IN YOUR LIFETIME. AND THERE'S *A LOT.*

I'VE SEEN ALL OF YOUR LIFE, EVERYTHING THERE *WAS* AND WILL BE.

YOU WANNA WIN THIS CONTEST? *SURPRISE* ME.

DING DING

NNGH! WHY DOES HER TIME TRAVEL HURT?!

LEMME GUESS, YOU DRAG ME THROUGH THE DEATHS OF PEOPLE I LOVE UNTIL I QUIT? SOLID PLAN.

WHAT? NOT HAVING FUN?!

OOF. SOMEONE IS HAVING A BAD DAY.

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT YOU WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY IF YOU COULD?

HERE YOU ARE, CHAMPION. THE PERFECT CHANCE TO SAVE HER. I WILL EVEN WAIT RIGHT HERE.

LET'S SEE IF YOU SURPRISE ME.

THIS IS CYRIOS' TRICK. DISTRACTION. KEEPING ME OFF-BALANCE SO ALL I CAN DO IS REACT.

I KNOW I CAN'T SAVE GWEN. THE SAME WAY I COULDN'T SAVE UNCLE BEN.

BUT I CAN END THIS STUPID CONTEST QUICKLY.

NOT BAD, CHAMPION! WAY TO KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE PRIZE.

DING DING

DING DING

VALIANT ATTEMPT. NOW *AND* THEN.

BONGGGGGG

WHIFF

GAHH!

HER YANKING ME THROUGH TIME... IT'S LIKE A *GUT PUNCH* EACH TIME WE JUMP.

BUT I WON'T LET CYRIOS' PLAYLIST OF MY FAILURES DISTRACT ME.

RATHER THAN SAVING A LIFE, MAYBE SAVE A BUNCH OF LIVES BY FIXING AN OLD MISTAKE?

LET'S JUMP A MINUTE OR SO FORWARD.

DING DING

YOU KNOW THAT GUY, RIGHT? HOW DO THINGS TURN OUT FOR HIM?

GUH. HURTS SO MUCH. I CAN'T FOCUS.

ONLY HESITATED A FEW SECONDS THAT TIME. WELL DONE!

SHALL WE SEE ***WHEN*** WE END UP NEXT?

DING DING

WHIFF

CHAMPION. I AM NOT LIKE MY ***BROTHERS***. I HAVE STUDIED YOU HUMANS SINCE STRANGE FIRST BROKERED HIS ***DEAL*** WITH MY FATHER.

YOUR LIVES ARE BUT ***FLICKERS***, YET YOU SPEND ALL OF YOUR TIME IN THE PAST OR THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE POWER TO CHANGE EITHER...

THE INEVITABILITY OF TIME IS NOT JUST ABOUT AGING, BUT ALSO *CHANGE*.

WHILE YOU PHYSICALLY CHANGE, CHAMPION, YOUR FAILURES ARE EMBARRASSINGLY FOREVER THE *SAME*.

IT IS *PREDICTABLE* AND SO *BORING*.

DING DING

IT DOES MAKE ME WONDER... HOW CAN YOU NOT SEE THAT FAILURE IS YOUR ONLY OPTION NO MATTER *WHEN* YOU ARE? IN THE PAST...

I HATE TIME TRAVEL.

WHIFF

...OR THE FUTURE.

ALL THE PARADOXES AND MEANINGLESS, CHANGEABLE RULES.

WHIFF

BUT A *PARADOX* IS EXACTLY WHAT I NEED RIGHT NOW. I ATTACK CYRIOS DIRECTLY AND SHE JUST SKIPS TO ANOTHER TIME. I HAVE TO WORK *SMARTER*, NOT HARDER.

WHIFF

HEY, SINCE YOU SEEM TO LIKE THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN VOICE, ANSWER A QUICK QUESTION FOR ME...

YOU'RE THE INEVITABILITY OF TIME, RIGHT? SO YOU SHOULD ***ALREADY KNOW*** WHO WINS THIS FIGHT.

YOU FOOL. YOU THINK YOU ***CAN*** WIN. ***STILL.*** YOU CAN BARELY ***MOVE.***

STOP! THIEF! STOP HIM!

YOUR FUTURE WILL BE A CRIMSON WASTELAND THAT MY FATHER WILL WREAK UPON YOUR RIDICULOUS REALITY.

OH YEAH? *SHOW ME.*

IF HE MAKES IT TO THE ELEVATOR--

YOU WILL SEE THAT YOU FAIL IN EVERY TIME. HOW PATHETIC.

DING DING

SORRY TO INTERRUPT.

SURPRISE.

KRAK

"SURPRISE ME," CYRIOS SAID AS SHE DRAGGED ME BACK AND FORTH THROUGH TIME.

SO I SLOW DOWN FOR A SECOND AND THINK.

I SET MY MIND TO BEING IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME AND TRUST MY REAL SUPER-POWER, MY BRAIN, TO DO THE REST OF THE WORK.

AND THEN I USE MY LESSER POWERS TO CLEAN HER CLOCK.

DON'T YOU LOVE A TIME PARADOX, PAST ME?

RIGHT NOW? YES.

FYI, THE IDEA YOU HAD *BEFORE* CYRIOS TIME-JUMPED, ABOUT CREATING A DEVICE TO DETECT ***WHEN THIS*** FUTURE JUMP HAPPENS, IS *SPOT-ON.*

NOW I JUST HAVE TO DO THE HARD PART OF WORKING WITH *STRANGE* AND *DOING* IT.

I HAVE FAITH IN YOU.

BUT LOOK, I CAN'T SAY TOO MUCH. HANG IN THERE, OKAY?

WHY DO I FEEL LIKE THAT LITTLE PEP TALK MEANS THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET ***REALLY*** BAD?

YOU INSIGNIFICANT SPECK!

YOU ARE STILL ***HUMAN...*** A ***NOTHING*** IN THE CONCEIT OF THE UNIVERSE!

YOU ARE ***SO*** CLEVER, BUT EVEN IN YOUR SUCCESS, YOU CAN FAIL.

WHY DON'T I SURPRISE YOU...?

UNIMAGINABLE PAIN.

CYRIOS SPLITS MY CONSCIOUSNESS, PLUNGING ME INTO EVERY MOMENT OF MY LIFE AT THE *SAME INSTANT.*

BIRTH.

DEATH.

AND ALL OF THE *AGONY* IN BETWEEN.

IT.

IS.

TOO.

MUCH.

ANOTHER *REED OF RAGGADORR* SPENT AND I'M BACK--

--WHERE WE STARTED.

PETER? ARE YOU OKAY?

I CAN'T DO THIS. I CAN'T SIT HERE AND PRETEND TO BE OKAY, WHEN MY NEURONS ARE STILL STINGING WITH *DEATH.*

I... YEAH. SORRY. I'M JUST A BIT OUT OF IT TODAY.

RANDY, JUST PICK WHICHEVER PHOTOS LOOK BEST.

WAIT, ARE YOU SURE...?

SHAY, CAN I WALK YOU TO THE SUBWAY?

UM, YEAH, OKAY.

PETER, IS EVERYTHING OKAY?

NO. I'M TIRED OF DYING.

YEAH, FINE.

I CAN'T TELL SHAY ABOUT ANY OF THIS. I CAN'T TELL HER *ANYTHING.*

YOU KNOW, YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIE TO ME. I THINK WE'RE PAST THAT.

IF ONLY SHE KNEW...

LOOK, PETER--I'M SORRY YOU LOST YOUR JOB AT OSCORP. BUT IT'S NORMAL TO WORRY ABOUT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT.

OOF. WITH EVERYTHING GOING ON, I COMPLETELY FORGOT THAT I'M ***UNEMPLOYED.***

YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT. I'VE JUST BEEN STRUGGLING A BIT, BUT YOU SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

NONSENSE! WHAT KIND OF MONSTER WOULD I BE IF I JUST IGNORED YOUR PAIN?

HOW ABOUT THIS: WHY DON'T I TREAT YOU TO A PICNIC TOMORROW?

YOU KNOW WHAT...THAT SOUNDS LIKE A GREAT IDEA. I'LL SEE YOU THEN.

St Station
Queens

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES I'LL ACTUALLY GET TO ENJOY A PICNIC WITHOUT ANOTHER SCION SHOWING UP?

NONEXISTENT. I'LL CALL HER LATER AND FIND A REASON TO CANCEL. HOPEFULLY, I CAN MAKE IT UP TO HER AFTER ALL THE SCION NONSENSE.

BUT FIRST, GOTTA GET HOME...

...AND HOPE FOR NO MORE SURPRISES.

PETER! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

OH CRAP. SHE LOOKS MAD. "REFUSED HER SECOND HELPING OF WHEAT CAKES" MAD.

AUNT MAY... I'M SO SORRY. I FORGOT--

YOU FORGOT? FORGOT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO FINISH PLANNING THE F.E.A.S.T. COMMUNITY DAY ACTIVITIES?!

I WAS GOING OVER MY PHOTOS FOR THE GALLERY SHOWING AND--

TELL ME YOU AT LEAST REMEMBERED TO ASK *NORMAN* ABOUT THE DONATION HE PROMISED? WE NEED IT FOR THE BALANCE WE OWE THE VENDORS.

ACTUALLY... NO.

PETER, ***I*** KNOW YOU HAVE YOUR OWN LIFE, BUT I NEED TO BE ABLE TO DEPEND ON YOU TO KEEP YOUR WORD.

THE EVENT IS ONLY A WEEK AWAY! DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH WE HAVE TO DO?

I'M DOING THE BEST I ***CAN***, AUNT MAY! ***OKAY?*** I'VE HAD A TERRIBLE WEEK, AND I ***FORGOT.***

I'M SORRY. I'LL CALL YOU A RIDE. I'LL MAKE SURE I'M AT THE NEXT MEETING.

NOT NECESSARY, I'LL TAKE THE BUS. BUT PETER...IS EVERYTHING OKAY?

FINE. I'M JUST *TIRED.*

I CAN'T KEEP THIS MANY PLATES SPINNING. IT'S ALWAYS BEEN HARD TO BALANCE BEING SPIDER-MAN WITH MY NORMAL LIFE.

BUT THIS CHAMPION STUFF IS ON A WHOLE OTHER LEVEL.

SHAY IS RIGHT. I SHOULD TALK TO SOMEONE.

SOMEONE I KNOW WILL *UNDERSTAND...*

MAYBE THIS IS A BAD IDEA.

PLEASE TELL ME YOU DIDN'T COME ALL THIS WAY TO ASK ME TO STEAL ANOTHER MAGIC BOOK.

NO. AND I'M NOT GOING TO ASK ABOUT THE TIARA YOU HAVE IN YOUR BAG EITHER.

IT'S ACTUALLY A CROWN.

THERE'S A DIFFERENCE?

YES. ABOUT TWO MILLION DOLLARS.

OKAAAYYY, SO WHY ARE YOU HERE?

I CAME TO APOLOGIZE.

REALLY?

I SHOULD'VE KNOWN YOU WERE SINGLE AGAIN. I SHOULD ASK YOU MORE ABOUT YOUR LIFE.

YOU'RE A FRIEND, AND I SHOULD BE MORE APPRECIATIVE OF YOU PUTTING UP WITH ME.

SO, I'M *SORRY*. I'VE BEEN A TERRIBLE FRIEND.

LET ME GUESS: YOU DIED AGAIN AND IT GAVE YOU A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THINGS?

IN A WAY.

WELL, EITHER WAY, THANK YOU.

SO, DID YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE EX...?

ABSOLUTELY NOT. THAT IS A CHAPTER OF MY LIFE BEST LEFT IN THE PAST.

BUT I AM CURIOUS...HOW'S THE WHOLE CHAMPION THING GOING?

TERRIBLY. EVEN WHEN I WIN, I DIE. AND BETWEEN DOING STUFF AT F.E.A.S.T., THE GALLERY SHOW, AND DATING, WELL, LET'S JUST SAY PETER PARKER ISN'T EXACTLY KNOCKING IT OUT OF THE PARK.

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE IT ALL WORK. I'M NOT SURE I ***CAN.***

WANT SOME ADVICE?

AT THIS POINT, I'LL TAKE ANYTHING SHORT OF A LOBOTOMY.

FIND YOUR *JOY.*

THERE IS SO MUCH TO LIFE WE DON'T CONTROL, BUT HAPPINESS? SMALL MOMENTS OF DELIGHT? WE CAN CLAIM THOSE FOR OURSELVES, AND WE SHOULD. *UNAPOLOGETICALLY.*

IS THIS WHERE YOU URGE ME TO TAKE UP A LIFE OF CRIME?

HEY, IF IT WORKS, IT WORKS.

EITHER WAY, HANG IN THERE. IF ANYONE CAN TURN THINGS AROUND, IT'S ***YOU.***

THANKS. I APPRECIATE THE PEP TALK.

WELL, THERE'S A REALLY NICE CROWN IN MY BAG, AND I APPRECIATE YOU NOT TAKING IT FROM ME.

YEAH, ABOUT THAT...

YOU STINK, SPIDER!

DON'T I KNOW IT, CAT.

SHE'S RIGHT. I NEED TO FIND MY JOY...

SO, THE BEST WINE AT THE BODEGA WAS ONLY EIGHT BUCKS, SO I HOPE YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT.

I WOULD BE HAPPY WITH GRAPE JUICE. LET ME PUT THESE FLOWERS IN WATER BEFORE WE GO...

HEY, THANKS FOR THINKING OF THIS. I REALLY COULD USE A RELAXING DAY. THINGS HAVE REALLY BEEN...NOT GREAT LATELY.

WELL, I PERSONALLY THINK THE BAD TIMES MAKE THE GOOD TIMES ALL THE SWEETER. BUT, PETER, I GET IT. I'VE BEEN THERE.

THE FIRST YEAR I WAS AT RAVENCROFT, THERE WAS AN INMATE, A QUIET WOMAN WHO'D BEEN PUT THERE FOR A TERRIBLE CRIME.

I ALWAYS SAY PEOPLE ARE MORE THAN JUST THE WORST DAY OF THEIR LIFE. EVEN WITH THIS WOMAN.

THAT WAS UNTIL I SAW HER ATTACK ANOTHER INMATE. THE THINGS SHE *DID*, THE RAW BRUTALITY OF IT ALL...

AFTER THAT DAY, I WAS TERRIFIED TO BE AROUND THE WOMAN. I HAD NIGHTMARES FOR *MONTHS*.

HOW DID YOU NOT JUST *QUIT?*

OH, THAT'S THE THING. I ***DID***. SWORE I WOULD NEVER GO BACK.

BUT I ***CHOSE*** RAVENCROFT, AND THERE ARE THINGS ABOUT MY JOB THAT I LOVE. I HAD TO FOCUS ON THOSE AND NOT MY FEAR.

ANYWAY, THE REST OF THE STORY IS A DRAG, AND I DON'T WANT TO RUIN THE MOOD. I JUST WANT A NICE AFTERNOON.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE AN AMAZING IDEA.

HE LOOKS SO WEAK. WE SHOULD CHALLENGE HIM ***NOW.***

NO, CALLIX. WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THIS NEW CHAMPION BEFORE WE RUSH INTO THINGS.

FINE. IF YOU SAY SO, CYRA.

HE KNOWS VERY LITTLE MAGIC AND HAS DEFEATED THREE OF US.

BETTER WE STUDY HIM BEFORE MAKING OUR MOVE...

I DO NOT UNDERSTAND THIS PETER PARKER JUST YET.

ALASKA.

MARKO! IF YOU AREN'T GOING TO PASS THE BALL, AT LEAST *SHOOT IT!*

WHERE SHOULD I ***PASS*** IT, *TEMPER?* EVERYONE IS COVERED.

THAT IS BECAUSE *KID OMEGA* IS A LEVEL-TEN BADASS AT GAMING.

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW THIS IS MORE FUN THAN PLAYING BASKETBALL FOR REAL.

GUH!

AND ANOTHER BUCKET FOR OMEGA. WOOT!

SCHING

WHOA THERE. WAIT, ARE YOU QUITTING?

NO, *MAGIK*, I JUST... THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG.

DON'T WORRY, CAIN. I'LL DEFEND YOUR HONOR. TAKE THAT!

WHAT? A THREE-POINTER? HOW?!

I CAN'T PLAY. I MUST ***PREPARE.***

"PREPARE" FOR *WHAT?*

#6 Variant by Lucas Werneck

NEW YORK CITY.

OKAY, SO, THIS IS GOING TO LET ME KNOW WHEN *CYRIOS* CASTS HER TIME-TRAVEL WINDOW SIX MONTHS FROM NOW?

IT SHOULD IF YOU CAST THE SPELL INSIDE THE DEVICE PROPERLY.

WELL, I PUT A *TIMER* INSIDE JUST IN CASE I DIDN'T.

NICELY DONE, PETER.

SINCE *FUTURE ME* PUNCHED CYRIOS LIKE I PLANNED, THIS IS GUARANTEED TO WORK BASED ON EITHER *YOUR* MAGIC OR *MY* TECH. BELT AND SUSPENDERS, AS THEY SAY.

BRILLIANT. IF THERE'S NOTHING ELSE...

ACTUALLY, THERE *IS* SOMETHING, STEPHEN.

HOW DO I *STOP DYING?*

HOW DO YOU...? YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO EXPLAIN.

WE'RE *THREE SCIONS OF CYTTORAK IN,* AND I'VE ALREADY USED UP *THREE* OF MY *REEDS OF RAGGADORR* TO BRING ME BACK TO LIFE.

I FOUGHT GRAVITY GUY, A GUY WHO THINKS SIZE IS THE *ONLY* THING THAT MATTERS, AND GRANDMA TIME. THREE WINS, THREE HORRIBLE DEATHS. TRUST ME, *NOT* FUN.

I KNOW I CAN WIN. BUT HOW DO I STOP *DYING?*

YOU DON'T.

I *DON'T?*

I'VE *MEMORIZED* EVERY SPELL IN EVERY MAGIC BOOK YOU RECOMMENDED SINCE WE LAST SPOKE. SURELY THERE'S A WAY TO FIGHT THE SCIONS WITHOUT DYING *EVERY SINGLE TIME.*

YOU. DON'T. SURVIVE.

YOU DIE. THAT IS WHAT THE REEDS ARE *FOR.* THAT IS THE ASSIGNMENT. I THOUGHT WE'D PRETTY MUCH COVERED THIS *IN DEPTH.*

THE SCIONS ARE BEINGS WITH *GODLIKE* POWERS. DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE YOU CAN TRIUMPH OVER THEM AND NOT PAY A STEEP PRICE?

I JUST-- HOW DO YOU ***STAND*** IT? THE PAIN, THE AGONY OF DYING, AND THEN...NOT.

MOSTLY, I JUST FOCUS ON NOT LOSING. BECAUSE IF THE COVENANT FAILS, THE PAIN WILL BE *INCONSEQUENTIAL* COMPARED TO EVERYTHING ELSE.

YEAH, I KEEP HEARING THAT. WHAT ***IS*** THE POINT OF THIS COVENANT, ANYWAY?

I'VE TOLD YOU THIS AS WELL. THE COVENANT IS WHAT HOLDS TOGETHER THE *CASKET.*

BUT *WHAT IS* THIS CASKET? WHAT IS IT *HOLDING BACK?* C'MON, STRANGE, *THROW ME A BONE HERE.*

IF THE COVENANT FAILS... IF THE CASKET *FALLS...* UNIMAGINABLE SUFFERING WILL BEFALL THE PLANET AND EVERY SINGLE HUMAN LIVING UPON IT.

THAT MUST NOT HAPPEN. AS THE CHAMPION, THAT SHOULD BE YOUR *ONE* AND *ONLY* CONCERN.

OKAY, YEAH, ***FINE.*** WHATEVER. I GET IT, STRANGE. KEEP DYING AND STOP ASKING QUESTIONS. FOR THE GOOD OF HUMANITY.

I MUST BE GOING. GOOD LUCK WITH THE ***TWINS.*** I HAVE ALWAYS FOUND THEIR DYNAMIC FASCINATING.

YEAH, THANKS, I'M SURE THEY'RE *GREAT* PARTY GUESTS. I'LL TELL THEM YOU SAID HELLO.

I TRUST STRANGE, BUT THERE HAS TO BE A WAY TO AVOID DYING.

THERE JUST ***HAS*** TO.

LATER...

LISTEN, SO I KNOW WE WEREN'T GOING TO USE SHOTS OF ***SPIDER-MAN,*** BUT TO GET THE WHOLE GALLERY, WE NEEDED ***SOME*** OF IT TO BE SPIDEY STUFF.

THAT SAID, THEY'RE REALLY GIVING US A COMPELLING STORY.

YEAH, DEFINITELY.

GALLERY 862

TAXI

TAXI

JUST TO BE CLEAR, JUST WHAT *IS* THE STORY I'M TELLING HERE WITH THESE PHOTOS?

PETER! ARE YOU ***SERIOUS?*** IT'S A CLASSIC *DAVID VS. GOLIATH* STORY.

HERE YOU HAVE THIS GUY WHO IS ***CLEARLY*** OUTMATCHED IN SO MANY WAYS AND EVEN GETS ROUGHED UP A BIT. AND YET HE DOESN'T STOP! HE JUST KEEPS *GOING.*

LIKE I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO SINCE I THOUGHT YOU WOULD HATE THAT WE WERE INCLUDING THESE.

YEAH, I GUESS. I MEAN, I WOULDN'T SAY THAT SPIDER-MAN IS TOTALLY *OUTMATCHED*, BUT I GET THE ANGLE.

PEOPLE ARE GOING TO EAT IT UP.

ALICE, THE GALLERY OWNER, AND I WERE THINKING OF PRICING THE IMAGES AS A SERIES, SINCE EVERYONE WILL WANT THE *STORY* AND NOT *JUST* THE *PHOTO*...

WAIT...

PETER, ARE YOU LISTENING?

COULD THAT BE ONE OF THE...?

YEAH, SORRY, I THINK I JUST SAW SOMEONE WHO OWES ME MONEY...

OH, THAT'S ALICE'S DAD. NICE GUY. GREAT BEARD.

SURE. ANYWAY, YOU WERE SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT SELLING THE STORY?

I THOUGHT I SAW A SCION.

I NEED TO FOCUS ON GETTING READY FOR THE NEXT FIGHT...

NEARBY...

I'M GOING TO CHALLENGE HIM NOW, *SISTER.* I'M TIRED OF WAITING.

CALLIX. WHY RUSH? THIS IS ALL SO STUPID, ANYWAY.

WHY ARE YOU SO *UNENTHUSIASTIC* ABOUT THE MOST IMPORTANT BATTLE OF OUR LIVES? THIS IS OUR CHANCE FOR *GLORY.* CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT FATHER WILL SAY WHEN WE WIN?

YOU SEEM TO BE IGNORING THE FACT THAT THIS NEW CHAMPION'S ALREADY DEFEATED *THREE* OF OUR SIBLINGS. WE'RE STATISTICALLY MORE LIKELY TO *LOSE.*

CYRA. YOU HAVE TOO LITTLE FAITH IN ME, LITTLE SISTER.

I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS SILLINESS OF YOURS. *I* WILL DEFEAT THIS NEW CHALLENGER, AND THEN FATHER WILL SEE I AM THE *BEST* AMONG US.

YOU ARE GOING TO LOSE, BECAUSE YOU *UNDERESTIMATE* YOUR FOE. AND ALL FATHER WILL SEE IS THAT YOU ARE AN *ARROGANT FOOL.*

FELICIA WAS RIGHT. I HAVE TO EMBRACE THE SMALL BITS OF JOY IN MY LIFE. EVEN IF I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THE NEXT SCION BATTLE.

THIS IS THE LAST ONE, AUNT MAY.

PETER, THANK YOU FOR HELPING OUT. WE'VE JUST BEEN SO SHORT-STAFFED LATELY.

SOMETIMES, THAT JOY IS MANUAL LABOR AND GUILT TRIPS.

DON'T WANT TO BE A NUDGE, BUT WERE YOU ABLE TO ASK NORMAN ABOUT THE CHECK FOR THE COMMUNITY DAY?

I DID, AND HERE YOU GO.

AH! THANK YOU, PETER. I KNOW YOU HAVE A LOT GOING ON.

SHE DOESN'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT.

OH! YOU AND SHAY ARE STILL COMING OVER FOR DINNER TONIGHT, CORRECT?

DINNER IS LAST ON MY TO-DO LIST.

I'M FAR MORE CONCERNED WITH THE NEXT SCION. I'VE FACED BIG STAKES BEFORE, BUT THIS CHAMPION THING IS ON ANOTHER LEVEL, EVEN IF STRANGE WON'T TELL ME EXACTLY WHY.

THE STAKES ARE SO HIGH MY SPIDER-SENSE IS A CONSTANT HUM.

OF COURSE. SHAY IS REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.

GOOD, I REALLY LIKE HER. YOU KNOW, I WAS THINKING--

WE HAVE A NO-ROMANTIC-ADVICE CLAUSE, MAY!

OKAY, OKAY!

A HUM THAT SOMETIMES IS CLOSER TO A ROAR.

AND HERE I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU ABOUT THE AMAZING DATE I HAD...

OOF. MAYBE THIS CONVERSATION IS THE DANGER MY SPIDER-SENSE WAS WARNING ABOUT.

CYRA WAS WRONG. THE MAN IS A HAPLESS FOOL.

THIS NEW CHAMPION WILL BE EASILY HANDLED.

WHINE

ARE YOU READY TO FEAST, MY BEAUTIES?

ARF ARF GROWL

I'M READY.

LET ME GUESS, YOU'RE THE NEXT SCION AND YOU REPRESENT THE INEVITABILITY OF *A-HOLES.*

YOU'RE *BOLD*, CONFRONTING ME BEFORE I'VE CHALLENGED YOU.

THIS JUST GETS BETTER. YOU RUSH TO YOUR DEATH. I'LL BE HAPPY TO OBLIGE YOU--WHEN *I* DECIDE IT'S TIME.

WOW, THAT'S REAL NEIGHBORLY OF YOU.

I'M TIRED OF THESE SCIONS, OF THEIR ARROGANCE, OF THEIR *EGO*.

I'VE BEATEN THREE OF THEM AND YET THEY STILL ACT LIKE *I'M* THE LOSER HERE.

HOW ABOUT THIS, THEN: *I* CHALLENGE *YOU*. RIGHT *HERE*, RIGHT *NOW*.

WHAT? *NO!* YOU CAN'T *DO* THAT. THAT IS NOT HOW THIS WORKS. *I* HAVE TO ISSUE THE FORMAL CHALLENGE.

ACTUALLY, BROTHER, *HE CAN*.

IT IS MERELY *TRADITION* THAT WE ISSUE THE CHALLENGES *FIRST.*

WAIT, I HAVE TO FIGHT *BOTH* OF YOU AT *ONCE?*

NO, I AM SLIGHTLY YOUNGER THAN MY TWIN. I WILL CHALLENGE YOU AFTER HE *LOSES.*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, *DEAR SISTER.*

I AM CALLIX, THE FOURTH SCION, THE INEVITABILITY OF ***PAIN,*** AND I ***ACCEPT*** YOUR CHALLENGE.

OF COURSE, YOU WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO ALLOW MY ***CRIMSON CANINES*** TO UNLEASH AGONY AS YOU TRY TO DEFEAT *ME.*

HEY! YOUR FIGHT IS WITH *ME!*

I HAVE TO STOP... WHATEVER THOSE THINGS ARE FIRST. I CAN'T LET ANYONE ELSE GET HURT.

DOGGY!

WHERE, SWEETIE? WHERE DO YOU SEE A DOGGY?

AIEEEEEEE!

MOMMY!

BALM OF BATHSHEBA!

WHAT? WHAT HAPPENED?

BAD DOGGY!

SPIDER-SEN--

KRAK

FASCINATING. YOU SEEM TO ACTUALLY *CARE* ABOUT THESE PEOPLE. MUCH MORE THAN YOUR PREDECESSOR, I THINK.

SLAM

DAMN, THAT HURT. CAN'T LET HIM DISTRACT ME. I HAVE TO STOP THOSE DOGS!

DON'T RUN, LITTLE BUG.

THEY HAVEN'T HIT ANYONE ELSE YET, BUT I HAVE TO STOP THEM BEFORE THEY GET THE CHANCE.

LUCKILY, I HAVE JUST THE THING.

BINDING OF--

WHOOSH

ALMOST GOT ME AGAIN.

HEY! DOESN'T YOUR PLANE OF EXISTENCE HAVE LEASH LAWS?

BINDING OF ARCEUS!

THWP THWP

SZZZSSH HHHH

SZZZZT

LET'S HOPE THIS WORKS.

DO YOU REALLY THINK A SIMPLE BINDING WILL STOP MY HOUNDS?

NO, NOT REALLY.

BUT SENDING THEM BACK TO *WHEREVER THEY CAME FROM* SHOULD.

THAT...

THAT WAS *NOT* THE BINDING OF ARCEUS.

NOPE! ARCEUS IS A POKEMON!

OOF.

THOK

ELSEWHERE...

MAY! GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN. I HOPE I'M NOT TOO EARLY.

NO, SHAY, *YOU'RE* RIGHT ON TIME.

IS PETER HERE YET?

AH, NO. BUT I SPOKE TO HIM EARLIER-- I'M SURE HE'S JUST RUNNING LATE.

I THOUGHT WE WERE PAST THIS...

CAN I ASK YOU A QUESTION?

OF COURSE!

IS PETER ***ALWAYS*** LIKE THIS? I KNOW HE HAS A LOT ON HIS PLATE, BUT I JUST FEEL AS THOUGH, I DON'T KNOW, HE SEEMS REALLY ***DISTRACTED.***

PETER HAS ALWAYS BEEN A BIT...DISTANT AT TIMES. BUT I THINK RIGHT NOW, HE'S JUST GOING THROUGH IT. BE PATIENT WITH HIM. HE'S A GOOD MAN.

OKAY, THANKS FOR BEING HONEST.

ANY TIME. NOW TELL ME WHAT YOU'VE BEEN UP TO. I HAVE A FEELING WE HAVE SOME TIME TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER BEFORE PETER GETS HERE...

THAT WAS ACTUALLY THE *UNRAVELING OF UROWOL.* SOMEONE TOLD ME ONLY *AMATEURS* CALL OUT THEIR SPELLS.

SO, ARE WE ***DONE*** HERE OR WHAT?

FOOL. I WILL ***NEVER*** YIELD TO YOU.

SUIT YOURSELF.

YEP. THESE SCIONS SUCK. SORE LOSERS, EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM.

THIS FEELS LIKE TOO MUCH.

IT'S SAD HOW BAD HE IS AT FIGHTING AND HOW SURPRISED HE IS EVERY TIME I LAND A PUNCH.

HIS HITS HURT, BUT IT'S JUST PAIN. I *KNOW* PAIN.

HE DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THE TYPE TO YIELD.

AND IF THIS IS WHAT IT TAKES TO *STOP DYING*, SO BE IT.

LOOK, WOULD YOU JUST YIELD? THIS IS EMBARRASSING. I'M *EMBARRASSED* FOR YOU. AND I'M A GUY WHO *KNOWS* WHAT IT'S LIKE TO TAKE A BEATDOWN.

I WILL NEVER SUBMIT TO YOU, WORM.

FIRST, I WAS AN ***INSECT,*** AND NOW I'M A ***WORM.*** I DUNNO, SEEMS LIKE A STEP BACKWARD.

ENOUGH. YOU CANNOT CONTINUE, CALLIX. IT IS MY TURN.

FINE, SISTER. HAVE YOUR *MOMENT.*

SO, THAT'S IT? I *WON?*

YES.

YOU HAVE *CLEARLY* WON. CONGRATULATIONS.

I DIDN'T DIE.

STRANGE WAS WRONG. I DEFEATED A SCION AND DIDN'T DIE AN EXCRUCIATING DEATH IN THE PROCESS.

AND NOW IT IS *MY* TURN.

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU WANT TO PUT A PIN IN THIS UNTIL TOMORROW?

NO.

SORRY, AUNT MAY. IT LOOKS LIKE I MIGHT BE A BIT LATE FOR DINNER.

OKAY. SHOW ME WHAT YOU'VE GOT.

WHAT I'VE GOT? I'VE GOT THE *INEVITABILITY OF DEATH.*

TO BE CLEAR... THIS IS A ***WASTE OF TIME.*** ALL OF IT.

THE ***COVENANT*** IS NOTHING BUT THE ECHO OF TWO ***EGOS*** IN COLLISION...

THE "UNSTOPPABLE" AND THE "IMMOVABLE"... SO ***STUPID.***

I ***HATE*** IT.

I HATE THAT I AM EXPECTED TO COME TO AN ***INSIGNIFICANT*** ROCK HURTLING AROUND A MOST ***AVERAGE*** STAR AND ENGAGE WITH THE "CHAMPION" OF A RACE OF ***UNSERIOUS*** BEINGS...

...AND PRETEND THAT ***ANYTHING*** WE DO HERE ***MATTERS.***

SORRY TO SAY, CHAMPION, OUR CONFLICT IS... INEVITABLE.

YOU CAN ALWAYS *QUIT.*

'CAUSE BASED ON THE BEATING I HANDED YOUR BROTHER, *DEFEAT* IS "INEVITABLE" TOO.

I HAVE NOT CONCEDED YET... EVEN NOW I PLOT MY SECOND WAVE...OF... ATTACK...

WE ARE *DIFFERENT.* *CALLIX* CRAVES POWER AND MY FATHER'S FAVOR.

I WANT TO GO BACK TO MY CHAMBERS. PERHAPS WASH THIS MISERABLE CHALLENGE FROM MY MIND WITH FLAGONS OF *RED WINE.* DRAW A BATH...

YOU DON'T SOUND LIKE THE OTHER "SCIONS"--

YOU DON'T SOUND LIKE EARTH'S CHAMPION, BUT HERE WE ARE.

EVISCERATE HIM, CYRA--

SHUT IT, TINFOIL LOKI!

SILENCE, SCION OF DOG #$%&.

HEH. "TINFOIL LOKI." A *WORTHY* JAPE.

THANKS... I... THANKS?

I DON'T WANT TO DIE AGAIN.

I... I AM *CERTAIN* THAT IS TRUE.

ARE YOU READY?

ONE SEC...

GOODWIN'S GOLDEN VOW...

FLAMES OF FARRADOR, GIVE ME STRENGTH--

⁂SIGH⁂ IT IS NOT THAT KIND OF CHALLENGE. YOUR WARDS ARE *MEANINGLESS.*

HOLD THIS SPHERE UNTIL YOU CAN NO LONGER BEAR IT.

SET IT DOWN, THE CHALLENGE IS OVER AND I WIN.

DOES IT BURN WITH THE HEAT OF A THOUSAND SUNS OR SOMETHING--?

PAIN IS CALLIX'S *UNIMAGINATIVE* OBSESSION.

THE SPHERE SHOWS ONLY... *TRUTH.*

I HAVE FOUND THAT TRUTH IS *UNBEARABLE* FOR YOUR KIND.

HOW DO I WIN?

YOU WILL NOT.

IF I *COULD,* HOW WOULD I DO IT?

HOLD ON UNTIL THE SPHERE HAS NOTHING LEFT TO SHARE.

LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.

"***MAYBELLE PARKER-JAMESON*** IS AN ACCOMPLISHED PHILANTHROPIST WHOSE ABILITY TO INSPIRE COMPASSIONATE ACTION AMID THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS...

"...EARNS HER THE POST OF ***CHAIRWOMAN*** OF THE ***INTERNATIONAL F.E.A.S.T. ORGANIZATION*** AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY-NINE.

"IN THE WINTER OF THE SAME YEAR, A VIRULENT ***PLAGUE*** SWEEPS ACROSS THE EARTH, CATCHING OFFICIALS AND HEALTH EXPERTS UNAWARE.

"THE INITIAL SURGE OF THE ESSEX VIRUS KILLS OVER ***THREE MILLION PEOPLE*** IN LESS THAN A MONTH.

"AS A ***CANCER SURVIVOR,*** MAY IS ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE AND HER ABILITY TO BREATHE ON HER OWN BECOMES GRAVELY COMPROMISED.

"HER CAREGIVERS TRY ***MULTIPLE*** INTERVENTIONS, BUT HER LUNGS WILL NOT ABSORB OXYGEN.

"THE SOUND OF THE ***BREATHING MACHINES*** IS DEAFENING.

"DOCTORS MUST YELL THEIR EXPLANATION THAT THE ONLY REMAINING COURSE OF ACTION IS ***INTUBATION*** AND INDUCED COMA.

"MAY CHOOSES INSTEAD TO OFFER UP HER BED TO SOMEONE WITH A ***GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF SURVIVAL.***

"SHE IS ***RESOLUTE*** IN HER GENEROUS DECISION.

"HER CAREGIVERS *HONOR* HER WISHES AND MOVE HER INTO TRIAGE WHERE SHE WILL BE MADE COMFORTABLE WITH A MORPHINE DRIP...

"...UNTIL SHE DIES AMONG *STRANGERS.*

"AS SHE DRIFTS OFF TO ENDLESS SLEEP, CHEST HEAVY WITH LABORED BREATH, MAY PARKER *DIES* WISHING THAT SHE COULD HAVE KISSED HER PETER..."

...HER *SON...*

ONE LAST TIME.

INEVITABILITY OF DEATH... THAT'S YOUR KINK.

I'VE SUFFERED MORE LOSS THAN YOU KNOW, LADY. I CAN WATCH *SAD MOVIES* ABOUT MY LIFE.

YOU *WILL.*

"MARY JANE WATSON IS NO STRANGER TO PAIN.

"AS A CHILD, SHE SURVIVED A *BROKEN* HOME AND ABUSIVE *FATHER*...

"AS A YOUNG WOMAN, SHE SUFFERED THE BRUTISH PLOTS OF OTHER ABUSIVE MEN... BUT REFUSED TO LET THOSE BATTLES DULL HER SPIRIT.

"SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH A FAMILY FRIEND BUT LOST HIM TO COSMIC FOLLY...

"WHEN HER MOST RECENT *COMPANION* INHERITED THE POWER TO *BEND REALITY*, SHE CHOSE TO USE IT TO HELP OTHERS...

"...BEFORE LOSING THEIR *CHILDREN*.

"AS SHE BATTLES ONE OF THE GREATEST VILLAINS HER CITY HAS EVER KNOWN, PART OF HER *REFLECTS* ON ALL THIS AND WONDERS...

"...'COULD I HAVE DONE THINGS *DIFFERENTLY*...?

"'*LIVED* DIFFERENTLY? *LOVED* DIFFERENTLY...?

"'BECAUSE FOR EVERYTHING I THINK I DID RIGHT...IT FEELS LIKE I NEVER QUITE HIT THE *JACKPOT* I WAS PROMISED.'

"AS THE LIFE DRAINS FROM HER BODY, ONLY ONE ANSWER COMES TO HER...

"MARY JANE DIES IN THE ARMS OF HER FORMER LOVER AND FRIEND... DISSATISFIED."

I GET THIS GAME..."WHO CAN GET *BORED* FIRST." COOL...

I'M WINNING.

THE FUTURE *ISN'T* WRITTEN. THIS IS ALL JUST EMO FANFIC--

TRUE. IT'S *POSSIBLE* SHE DIES IN HER SLEEP AT NINETY-FOUR... OR CHOKES ON SOME FRUIT *TOMORROW*...

WHAT IS INDISPUTABLE, HOWEVER, IS THAT HER LIFE *WILL* END...

I KNOW THAT...

YES, BUT NOW, YOU *FEEL* IT.

"JOHN JONAH JAMESON...

"A MILLIONAIRE. A SHAPER OF PUBLIC OPINION. A *FIREBRAND*...

"BRAIN EMBOLISM.

"THE CORPORATION THAT OWNS HIS SENSATIONALIST NEWS OUTLET HAS HIM REPLACED WITHIN A *WEEK*.

IT'S TIME TO GO, MR. JAMESON...

CYRA IS RIGHT. I KNOW IT TO THE *MARROW*...

"*SHAY AMELIA MARKEN* PAID OFF HER NURSING SCHOOL LOANS FIVE MONTHS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.

"SHE FAITHFULLY AND COMPETENTLY SERVED THE PATIENTS OF RAVENCROFT FOR NEARLY *TWO DECADES*.

"A DRUNK DRIVER CROSSES THE MEDIAN AND STRIKES HER VEHICLE AT OVER *ONE HUNDRED* MILES PER HOUR.

IT'S TIME TO GO, MS. MARKEN...

...IT DOESN'T MATTER...WHETHER OR NOT THIS IS *ACTUALLY* HOW MY FRIENDS DIE...

"*RANDOLPH ROBERT ROBERTSON* HAS BEEN AN ADVOCATE FOR THE DOWNTRODDEN AND OPPRESSED SINCE HIGH SCHOOL.

"WHEN A RALLY MEANT TO ADDRESS THE *HOUSING* CRISIS TURNS VIOLENT, HE IS ONE OF *SIX* TRAMPLED TO DEATH.

"BEFORE HIS SPINAL CORD IS BROKEN, HE WONDERS IF THE FIGHTS HAVE BEEN WORTH IT...

I'M HERE, MR. ROBERTSON...

...ONLY THAT THEY *WILL*.

"*FELICIA SARA HARDY* HAS BEEN CRIMINAL AND CRIMEFIGHTER. IN BOTH CAPACITIES, SHE DARED TO RESTORE A SEMBLANCE OF ECONOMIC *BALANCE* TO THE WORLD.

"ONE DAY, HER *LUCK* SIMPLY RUNS OUT. SHE FALLS TO HER DEATH *WITHOUT* REGRET.

"AFTER, HER CONSIDERABLE ESTATE IS *CONFISCATED* BY THE GOVERNMENT AND EARMARKED FOR REDISTRIBUTION INTO THE PRISON-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX.

HEY, FELICIA... IT'S TIME.

ONE DAY, WHATEVER MAKES THEM...*THEM*...WILL CEASE TO BE...

"*ELIZABETH BRANT-LEEDS* WONDERS WHAT WILL BECOME OF HER FAMILY ONCE SHE IS GONE.

"SHE HAS BEEN THE GENEROUS, LOVING *MATRIARCH* TO A FAMILY WHOM SHE FEARS WILL DISASSEMBLE IN THE WAKE OF HER PASSING.

MRS. BRANT...

"A MOMENT OF CLARITY GIFTS HER WITH THE REALIZATION THAT IT *DOES NOT MATTER*, AND SHE CAN *LET GO*.

"SHE WISHES HER LOVED ONES A LIFE OF *UNEVENTFUL SIMPLICITY*.

...AND THEY LEAVE BEHIND...

"*NORMAN OSBORN* IS THE SUBJECT OF NO LESS THAN *SEVENTY-EIGHT* NONFICTION BOOKS. SCIENTIST, SUPER VILLAIN, PUBLIC SERVANT, MONSTER... FATHER... EVERY DIMENSION OF HIS LIFE INSPIRES STUDY...

"FOR A FEW *DECADES*. AFTER THAT, HIS NAME APPEARS AS A *FOOTNOTE* IN BOOKS ABOUT OTHER NOTABLE HUMANS...

"AFTER THAT, HIS NAME IS ONLY FOUND AS AN ANSWER IN *TRIVIA* CONTESTS. HIS WORKS GREAT AND TERRIBLE...*FORGOTTEN*.

MR. OSBORN... IT'S TIME.

WHAT IS LEFT BEHIND?

"MILES GONZALO MORALES. BAILEY BRIGGS. GWENDOLYN MAXINE STACY.

"THE NEXT GENERATION OF *SPIDERS*... EXTINGUISHED ALONG WITH THE LIVES OF *COUNTLESS* OTHERS.

"THEIR DEATHS WILL BE *MEANINGLESS* IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE *CATACLYSM.*

"THEY DO NOT DIE AS *MARTYRS.*

"THEY DO NOT DIE AS *HEROES.*

"THEY JUST... *DIE.*

"HUMANS FULL OF POTENTIAL AND PROMISE AND LOVE AND FEAR AND CONFUSION ONE MOMENT...

"...EMPTY SHELLS OF MEAT AND VISCERA THE NEXT."

NO.

THEY'RE *KIDS.*

HUMAN CHILDREN DIE TOO. EVEN *BRAVE* ONES.

MR. MORALES... MILES...

I'M SORRY, BUT IT'S TIME--

NO.

SPIDER-MAN? *HOW...?*

OH...YOU'RE STILL *THEN*, IN THE *COVENANT*--

NOT THEM, COULSON!

IT'S THEIR TIME, SPIDEY... I'M SORRY. *TRULY...*

I CAN *SAVE* THEM!

YOU *DIDN'T.*

I'M SORRY... I HAVE TO DO MY *JOB.*

WAIT!

JUST *SET DOWN* THE SPHERE. IT WON'T GET BETTER--

NO! COULSON!

"YOU SEE...?

"IT'S NOT THE *PAIN* OF DYING. YOU HAVE FELT PAIN BEFORE...

"YOU'VE DIED YOURSELF...

YOU CAN'T--!

I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE. I HOPE YOU KNOW THAT.

MR. HARRIDAN, IT'S TIME...

"IT'S NOT THE *FEAR*, THOUGH THAT CAN BE TERRIBLE AT TIMES...

"...BUT YOU UNDERSTAND FEAR."

THEY-- THEY DESERVE TO *LIVE!*

STARK INDUSTRIES

EVERYTHING THAT LIVES, *DIES.*

YOU *KNOW* THAT.

HELLO, MR. ARPAO... IT'S TIME...

"IT'S NOT THE *LOSS ITSELF*, GREAT AS IT MAY BE...

"...SORROWFUL AS IT IS...

"UNCELEBRATED, UNNOTICED...

IT'S *INEVITABLE--*

DON'T SAY THAT!

HEY, CAPTAIN... IT'S TIME.

"...OR EVEN HERALDED.

"WHAT YOU UNDERSTAND NOW WITH CRYSTAL CLARITY EACH TIME YOU SEE A FELLOW HUMAN DIE...

"...IS THE UTTER LACK OF IMPACT THEY HAD ON THE WORLD.

I... I... *FEEL...*

I FEEL THE *WEIGHT* OF THEIR LIVES... *VANISHING...*

I DO *TOO*, PETE.

CAN'T YOU STOP? PLEASE?

"WITH A LONG ENOUGH VIEW TO THE HORIZON OF THE COSMOS, *NO SINGLE LIFE MATTERS.*

"A *FOUNDATIONAL* ELEMENT OF YOUR WORLDVIEW IS CRUMBLING MORE WITH EVERY DEATH TO WHICH YOU BEAR WITNESS.

"EVERYONE DIES.

"EVERYONE IS *FORGOTTEN.*

"EVERY LEGACY *ENDS.*

"EVERY GREAT WORK IS *LOST.*

"YOU CAME FROM *NOTHING*... YOU RETURN TO *NOTHING.*

"*LIFE IS NOTHING.* THIS IS WHY YOU FIGHT...

"...IN DEFENSE OF EPHEMERAL WHISPERS WHO WERE *DEAD* THE *INSTANT* THEY WERE BORN...

"...TRAPPED IN *MEANINGLESS* LIVES WITH *INEVITABLE* ENDS WHOSE ECHOES FADE AND LEAVE ONLY...

"...*SILENCE.*"

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH I *HATE* THIS, LITTLE HUMAN.

NO IDEA--

SHRAKK!

YOUR *DISTRACTION* WORKED, SISTER! NOW I SHALL *FINISH* THE BATTLE YOU *INTERRUPTED!*

THIS IS NOT *YOUR TIME*, CALLIX! *STOP!*

I WILL TELL FATHER OF YOUR *ASSISTANCE*, CYRA!

BUT HE *WILL* KNOW WHO *KILLED* THE CHAMPION!

THUD

SEE ME, FATHER!

CALLIX...

SHAKKT

SEE ME, CYTTORAK!

KRAKKT

SHRUKT

KRACHHHT

SEE ME!

KRAKKT

SEE ME!

KRAKKT

"HOW MANY DID YOU GET THROUGH...?

"ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-ONE THOUSAND, NINE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THREE IS MY RECORD.

"I COULDN'T WARN YOU... I'M *SORRY.*

"BUT YOU *DID* IT. YOU *HELD ON.*

"*THREE* SCIONS REMAIN, AND IF YOU CAN BELIEVE IT, THEY ARE *WORSE* THAN WHAT YOU'VE FACED THUS FAR.

"CYRA'S TRIAL *NEVER CHANGES.* THE OTHERS LIKE TO *EXPERIMENT*, BUT...

YOU'RE MORE THAN HALFWAY THROUGH, SPIDER-MAN...

HANG IN THERE--

SPIDEY?

"YOU HAVE ACQUITTED YOURSELF *WELL*, BUT..."

...I NEED YOU TO *REDOUBLE* YOUR EFFORTS, PETER. THE TRIALS AHEAD REQUIRE SKILL AND *IMAGINATION* AND--

WHY?

I...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION.

WHY DO WE DO IT...? *ANY* OF IT?

IT DOESN'T--

PETER... WHAT YOU SAW... WHAT YOU FELT...

I KNOW IT'S A LOT.

"A LOT"...

BUT YOU KNOW THAT PEOPLE *DIE*. YOU'RE NOT NAIVE. IT'S WHAT WE ARE--

EXACTLY.

AND WHAT WE ARE...IS *MEANINGLESS.*

PETER, I'M SORRY YOU WERE PULLED INTO THIS. I'M SORRY IT *HURTS--*

I'M SORRY *TOO,* DOC...

I QUIT.

YOU CAN'T "QUIT." THE COVENANT MUST BE UPHELD OR THE WORLD *FALLS!*

LET IT FALL...

I DON'T CARE.

65.DEATHS | DEATH AND THE SPIDER

DEATH CHANGES US.

GRANDPA?

THERE IS MORE TO IT THAN THE CESSATION OF LIFE, THE TRANSFERENCE OF ENERGIES...

...THE SIMPLE EXTINGUISHING OF MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES AND THE PERSONALITIES THAT HAVE RESULTED.

DEATH DOES NOT JUST CHANGE THE LIVING INTO THE DEAD. DEATH CHANGES **EVERY ASPECT** OF OUR UNIVERSE.

NOTHING LIVES THAT HAS NOT BEEN TOUCHED BY DEATH.

YOU...YOU OKAY?

PETER PARKER'S APARTMENT.

THE *COVENANT* MUST BE UPHELD OR THE WORLD FALLS!

I DON'T CARE!

YOU CAN'T *QUIT*, PETER! WE NEED YOU! THE *WORLD* NEEDS YOU!

PETER!

SLAM

WELL? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO *SAY* ANYTHING, COULSON?

YOU CAN *SEE* ME?

I MAY NOT BE *SORCERER SUPREME* ANYMORE, BUT I'M STILL A *MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS.*

OF COURSE I CAN SEE *DEATH* WHEN HE'S IN THE ROOM WITH ME.

SO ARE YOU GOING TO *DO* ANYTHING?

ABOUT WHAT?

ABOUT THIS *ABDICATION OF RESPONSIBILITY!*

SPIDER-MAN DIES, THE REEDS OF RAGGADORR BRING HIM BACK TO LIFE, HE CONTINUES UNTIL HE WINS! THAT'S HIS ROLE!

I CAN'T TAKE SIDES, STRANGE.

SAYS WHO? I KNOW YOU'RE NEW AT THIS, COULSON, BUT YOU'RE NOT THE WATCHER.

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO--?

BY THE HOLY SCROLLS OF THE VISHANTI, TALK TO HIM! HE'S JUST EXPERIENCED THOUSANDS OF DEATHS--MAYBE TENS OF THOUSANDS!

IF ANYONE KNOWS WHAT THAT'S LIKE, IT'S YOU!

RIGHT?

PHIL COULSON, AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D. RECENTLY DECEASED.

EVEN MORE RECENTLY RESURRECTED.

WHEN DEATH BECAME AN INFINITY STONE, THE STONE SOUGHT OUT HIS REMAINS AND BROUGHT HIM BACK--FOR REASONS HE CANNOT FATHOM.

MAYBE IT WAS FOR THIS.

MAYBE HE IS MEANT TO BE THE ONE TO GUIDE SPIDER-MAN OUT OF THE DARKNESS.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN STANDING THERE?

A WHILE.

YOU WENT OUT FOR A HOT DOG?

I WAS HUNGRY.

CAN WE TALK?

SPIDER-MAN IS A HERO, AFTER ALL.

SLAM!

AND WHAT IS PHIL COULSON IF NOT A FAN?

I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND. THE DOOR WAS--

WELL, IT WASN'T *OPEN*, EXACTLY, BUT I CAN DO THIS THING WHERE I CAN *WALK* THROUGH DOORS.

LOT OF PEOPLE WALK THROUGH DOORS. IT'S WHY THERE ARE DOORS.

I CAN WALK THROUGH--

CLOSED DOORS, YEAH, I GET IT.

WHAT DO YOU *WANT?*

I THINK I WAS SENT HERE TO GUIDE YOU OUT OF THE DARKNESS.

OR...TALK TO YOU OR WHATEVER.

CAN I SIT?

I DON'T CARE.

WHEN I WAS *SIX*, MY GRANDPA DIED. I WAS THE ONE WHO FOUND HIM, THOUGH I CAN'T REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT IT.

I WAS *SIX*, YOU KNOW?

NEXT TIME DEATH HAD ANY EFFECT ON ME WAS WHEN OUR DOG DIED.

TIME AFTER THAT... MY *FATHER*. THAT ONE... WELL.

I DON'T KNOW WHY THE *DEATH STONE* CHOSE ME, IS WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY. THERE'S NO SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP, NO UNIQUE CONNECTION...

WHY IT BROUGHT *ME* BACK TO LIFE INSTEAD OF, LITERALLY, *ANYONE ELSE*, I DO NOT KNOW. DEATH IS A MYSTERY, EVEN TO--

YOU'RE HERE TO TRY TO COACH ME THROUGH THIS MOMENT, RIGHT?

YOU DON'T EVEN *KNOW* ME.

SURE I DO.

YOU'RE...YOU'RE ***SPIDER-MAN.*** THE AMAZING, SPECTACULAR, FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD ***SPIDER-MAN.*** YOU'RE A HERO. YOU'RE--

I'M A COSTUMED CLOWN DOING CARTWHEELS IN THE STREET.

WHAT HAVE I ***DONE,*** COULSON?

I'VE FOUGHT BAD GUYS, INVITED CALAMITY, ENDANGERED MY LOVED ONES...***AND FOR WHAT?***

NOTHING EVER CHANGES.

ALL I'VE DONE IS DELAY THE INEVITABLE.

YOU'RE RIGHT. I ***DON'T*** KNOW YOU.

TO KNOW YOU, I'D HAVE TO SEE YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE PEOPLE YOU'VE LOST, BUT EVEN SO--

SO GO AHEAD.

WHAT?

THAT'S ONE OF YOUR SNAZZY NEW POWERS, ISN'T IT?

TAKE A ***GOOD*** LOOK.

SO COULSON LOOKS.

AND HE SEES THE DEATHS OF **RICHARD AND MARY PARKER**, YOUNG PARENTS SNATCHED AWAY FROM THEIR INFANT SON.

TWO LIFETIMES' WORTH OF LOVE DENIED TO HIM IN A SINGLE MOMENT OF CRUELTY.

A DIFFERENT LIFE SUBSTITUTED FOR THE ONE HE LOST WITH THEIR PASSING.

AND COULSON WATCHES A TRAGEDY UNFOLD THAT WILL FILL YOUNG PETER PARKER WITH UNIMAGINABLE, **IMPOSSIBLE** GUILT...

...THE LOSS OF THE MAN WHO EMBODIES THE VALUES OF **LOVE, UNDERSTANDING,** AND **RESPONSIBILITY** THAT WILL GUIDE PETER THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE.

AND THE LOSSES CONTINUED. DESPITE BEING SURROUNDED BY LOVED ONES WHO SEEK TO SHIELD AND SUPPORT HIM, THESE DEATHS ARE A REMINDER THAT SPIDER-MAN IS, ULTIMATELY, **ALONE--**

--AND THAT IT IS **HIS** JOB TO SHIELD AND SUPPORT **OTHERS.**

HE JUST NEEDS TO BE STRONG ENOUGH.

STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND THE SHATTERING OF WHATEVER COMPLACENCY HE HAD LEFT.

ANOTHER LIFETIME'S WORTH OF LOVE DENIED TO HIM BECAUSE THE UNIVERSE, IT SEEMS, CANNOT LET SPIDER-MAN BE **HAPPY.**

IT NEEDS HIM DRIVEN BY **GUILT** AND **FEAR** AND **RECRIMINATION.**

EVERY DEATH VISITED UPON SPIDER-MAN BATTERS HIM, MOLDS HIM, SHAPES HIM, INTO SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

COULSON CAN SEE IT NOW. HE CAN SEE THE RESULTS IF NOT THE HANDS AT WORK. IF NOT THE INTENT. THE PURPOSE.

BUT THERE IS A PURPOSE.

AND THIS SIMPLE, ELEGANT FACT FILLS HIM WITH HOPE, AND SUDDENLY, COULSON WONDERS.

HE WONDERS THAT WITHOUT ALL THIS DEATH...

...WOULD SPIDER-MAN BE ABLE TO SAVE ALL THIS LIFE?

STOP. NONE OF THIS MATTERS. NONE OF IT MEANS ANYTHING. EVERYONE DIES ANYWAY. AND USUALLY, IT'S AWFUL.

YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THAT.

COULSON COULD NOT SEE WHY THE DEATH STONE HAD CHOSEN HIM, OUT OF EVERYONE.

BUT A GLIMPSE INTO THE HARDSHIPS THAT PETER PARKER HAS ENDURED FORCES HIM TO RECKON WITH HIS OWN SHORTCOMINGS.

THERE IS A LOCKED DOOR IN HIS MEMORY--

--AND PETER HAS SHOWN HIM HOW TO WALK THROUGH IT.

HOW INTERESTING.

ONLY A HANDFUL OF BEINGS HAVE EVER BEEN ABLE TO SEE ME WHEN I HAVE NO INTENTION OF BEING SEEN.

WHY ***YOU***, I WONDER? WHY ARE YOU ABLE TO SEE ME NOW?

YOU HAVE NO POWER THAT I CAN DETECT. YOU ARE NEITHER *MUTANT* NOR *TELEPATH* NOR ANY SPECIAL *THING*.

HMPH.

PERHAPS YOU WILL BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THIS WHEN NEXT WE MEET, PHILLIP COULSON.

IS MY GRANDPA IN HEAVEN?

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH DEPENDS ON WHO YOU ARE, SO I WILL NOT ANSWER THAT FOR YOU.

BUT WHAT I *WILL* SAY IS THAT WHEN YOUR GRANDFATHER DIED, A VERSION OF YOU THAT ONLY *HE* KNEW VANISHED FROM THE WORLD.

ALL THE STORIES AND THOUGHTS AND MEMORIES HE HAD OF YOU, THAT *ONLY* HE HAD OF YOU, ARE NOW GONE FOREVER.

YOU SHOULD FEEL *DIMINISHED*. YOU SHOULD FEEL *LESS THAN*.

THIS WILL HAPPEN TO YOU, OVER AND OVER.

BUT WHEN *YOU* DIE--AND YOU WILL--YOU WILL JOIN WITH *ALL* OF THOSE DIFFERENT VERSIONS, BECOMING NOT ONLY THE PERSON YOU WERE--

--BUT THE PERSON YOU WERE TO *OTHER* PEOPLE.

PEOPLE ARE SCARED OF ME, BUT THEY HAVE NO REASON TO BE. I AM SIMPLY WHAT AWAITS.

I'M NOT SCARED OF YOU.

THEN PERHAPS YOU *ARE* SPECIAL AFTER ALL.

THE MOMENTS THAT SHAPE US.

THE TRAGEDIES AND TRIALS, THE DEATHS OF LOVED ONES, THE MISFORTUNES AND HARDSHIPS AND SETBACKS AND LOSSES...

THEY ARE EACH THEIR OWN **CHISEL**, AND THE CHISEL STRIKES THE **MARBLE**, AND THE SHAPE BENEATH IS GRADUALLY **REVEALED.**

IN SUCH A WAY, THE UNIVERSE BUILT SPIDER-MAN.

STRONG. DURABLE.

KIND. COMPASSIONATE.

NO HORN HONKING $350 FINE

HONK!

A MAN WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF HIS **TRUE RESPONSIBILITY.**

BUT THIS **COVENANT** DID WHAT YEARS OF TRAGEDY COULD NOT.

DEATH AFTER DEATH AFTER DEATH BEYOND WHAT EVEN DEATH **HIMSELF** SEES DAILY ON THIS PLANET.

THE REEDS OF RAGGADORR SAVED PETER PARKER.

PIZZA

BUT DEATH KILLED SPIDER-MAN.

PIZZA

THE CRIMSON CHAOS.

CYTTORAK'S THRONE ROOM.

FATHER, DID YOU SEE THAT NONSENSE?

CALLIX, WHO HAD ALREADY *LOST* HIS CHALLENGE, INTERFERED IN THE FIGHT OF *CYRA*, OH GREAT FATHER *CYTTORAK!*

FATHER, I *DEFEATED* THEIR CHAMPION! DID YOU NOT SEE?

WAS THAT THE APPROVAL YOU WERE *CRAVING*, BROTHER?

SEEMS MORE TO ME LIKE SILENT *DISAPPOINTMENT...*

FATHER. PLEASE.

ENOUGH, CALLIX. YOU HAD YOUR CHANCE AND FAILED. IT IS *CRADIOS'* TURN.

UNLESS YOU DISAGREE, WISE CYTTORAK?

MUST I CONTINUALLY BE *MOCKED* AND OVERLOOKED?

MANHATTAN.

I QUIT. I GAVE UP. ON *EVERYTHING.*

PETER. THERE'S FASHIONABLY LATE, AND THERE'S MISSING A MEETING WITH THE *GALLERY OWNER!* I *NEED* YOU HERE. MY REPUTATION'S ON THE LINE.

I'VE DISAPPOINTED MY FRIENDS.

PETER? DID YOU *HANG UP?!*

WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU CAN'T HELP WITH SETUP FOR *COMMUNITY DAY?*

THIS IS CRUNCH TIME!

YEAH. I TOLD YOU, MAY. I'M BUSY. IT'LL BE FINE.

I'VE ABANDONED MY FAMILY.

AFTER YOU WATCH-- *FEEL*--EVERYONE DIE, IT'S EASY TO CHANGE PRIORITIES.

IT'S HONESTLY BEEN PRETTY FREEING. I USED TO HAVE LOTS OF PROBLEMS.

NOW I ONLY HAVE ONE:

I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO EAT.

THIS HUMAN IS *NOTHING* LIKE YOU, STRANGE. HE NEVER TRULY ATTACKED ME. AND HE *NEVER* GAVE UP.

THIS IS WHY YOU ASKED FOR MY *HELP*, CYRA?

YES. LET ME FINISH.

WHEN *WE* FOUGHT, YOU WOULD *DETACH*. THIS CHAMPION *GRIEVED* EACH LIFE. EVEN THOSE HE'D NEVER *MET*.

IRRITATING.

THAT IS *ONE* WORD FOR HIM.

I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S GONE.

YEAH. THEY'RE SAYING IT WAS A BIG ONE, A *WIDOWMAKER.*

POOR GUY WAS JUST BRAGGING ABOUT HOW LUCKY HE WAS *SPIDER-MAN* SAVED HIM FROM GOING SPLAT. NOW HIS WIFE CAN'T AFFORD TO BURY HIM.

DAMN. SOME *LUCK.* I'LL PUT THIS UP IN THE WINDOW SO FOLKS KNOW ABOUT THE *MEMORIAL* AND THE *FUNDRAISER.*

THANKS. APPRECIATE IT.

IT'S THE WINDOW WASHER I SAVED WHEN THIS ALL STARTED.* BEFORE *CYRA* SHOWED ME THE TRUTH. OR AT LEAST A VERSION OF IT.

RIP KENNETH J. JR

BACK IN ASM #955!

ONE MORE REASON TO QUIT. EVEN WHEN I HELP, I'M JUST DELAYING THE *INEVITABLE.*

GIMME EVERYTHING IN THE REGISTER AND NO ONE GETS HURT!

OKAY, OKAY. PLEASE DON'T SHOOT ME.

HURRY UP.

SALE

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO CONVINCE YOURSELF THIS WAS A GOOD IDEA?

WHAT? ARE YOU TALKING TO ME?

HOT PRICE

CHIPS

CHIPS

YEAH, I'M TALKING TO YOU. YOU'RE GOING TO GET ***CAUGHT*** AND GO TO JAIL. FOR WHAT, LIKE SIXTY-FOUR DOLLARS IN THE REGISTER? NO ONE USES ***CASH*** ANYMORE.

YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE UP FIVE YEARS OF YOUR LIFE AND YOU CAN'T EVEN BUY A VIDEO GAME. ALL ***THIS***, AND FOR ***WHAT?***

A SYSTEM THAT GIVES US A FEW ***BILLIONAIRES*** AND LEAVES EVERYONE ELSE SCRABBLING FOR ***PENNIES?*** AND THEN YOU ***DIE*** AND YOUR FAMILY HAS TO HAVE A ***BAKE SALE*** TO ***BURY*** YOU.

IT'S A ***BROKEN*** WORLD AND A ***BROKEN*** SYSTEM, AND THE ONLY WAY TO ***WIN*** IS NOT TO ***PLAY*** AT ALL.

SALE 50

-MART

ICE CREAM

ANYWAY, YOU SHOULD JUST LEAVE IT ALONE. STOP ROBBING PEOPLE. IF YOU REALLY NEED MONEY, GO APPLY AT A GROCERY STORE OR SOMETHING.

BIG SALE

YO, ARE YOU OFF YOUR MEDS? BECAUSE YOU SOUND ***CRAZY.***

YOU SHOULDN'T MAKE FUN OF MENTAL HEALTH! IT'S ***IMPORTANT.*** SOME PEOPLE NEED MEDICATION AND ***THAT'S OKAY!*** ALSO, STEALING IS WRONG.

BAP

YEAH, SO SINCE THAT'S HANDLED...CAN I GO AHEAD AND PAY FOR THIS?

HEY, PETER! ARE YOU OKAY?

I'M FINE, SPIDER-BOY. JUST DONE LYING TO MYSELF.

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW HARD YOU WORK, YOU CAN'T CHANGE THINGS.

YOU'RE WHAT, EIGHT? DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME WITH THIS HERO NONSENSE. GO PLAY TAG OR SOMETHING. BE A KID.

I'M TEN!

AND JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE SAD DOESN'T MEAN YOU GIVE UP! YOU *HAVE* TO KEEP TRYING. BECAUSE THINGS CAN GET *BETTER!*

OPEN

THEY *DO* GET BETTER.

SADLY, THEY VERY MUCH *DO NOT.*

SORRY.

GOURMET DELI

PIZZA - SOD

WE ARE OPEN

LUNCH 20$

ICE CREAM

WHAT *IS* THIS? WHAT IS HE *DOING?*

HE QUIT. WHICH ISN'T NORMAL FOR HIM.

BUT I COULD ASK THE SAME OF YOU. YOUR CHALLENGE IS SUPPOSED TO BE OVER.

AH, YES, MY *GRAND CHALLENGE.*

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT. WHY DO I CARE ABOUT *HIM?*

TIMES SQUARE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I ACTUALLY AGREED TO MEET UP WITH YOU.

YOU'VE BEEN DISTANT FOR WEEKS, THEN YOU COMPLETELY *GHOST* ME FOR DAYS. NOW I GET A TEXT TO MEET YOU. ASKING FOR *HELP.*

THAT IS *NOT* HOW YOU TREAT SOMEONE. AND IT'S NOT HOW *I'LL* BE TREATED.

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, AND I'LL STOP BOTHERING YOU.

BUT CAN YOU ANSWER A QUESTION FIRST?

ARE YOU OKAY, PETER?

DOES IT MATTER?

YOU'VE LOST PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE. AT WORK.

YES. PART OF THE JOB AS A NURSE, SADLY.

AND YOU GO BACK TO WORK.

YES. OF COURSE.

HOW DO YOU DO IT? WHEN IT ALL FEELS SO *POINTLESS?*

...

I'D GOTTEN CLOSE TO A PATIENT ONCE. ELISA. SUPER STRONG, CHOSE A LIFE OF CRIME, GOT CAUGHT.

ALSO CHOSE THE LIFE OF A SMOKER. FINALLY STOPPED. BUT IT WAS TOO LATE.

WE TRIED TO FIGHT IT. WE LOST.

HAPPENS EVERY DAY AND IT *ALWAYS* HURTS. BUT THAT TIME, I WANTED TO QUIT.

A DAY OR TWO LATER, IT HIT ME. IT *DOES* HAPPEN EVERY DAY. THE DEATH. THE PAIN.

DOESN'T MATTER IF I'M A NURSE OR A CHECKOUT LADY AT CVS.

BUT I *LIKE* BEING A NURSE. I LIKE HELPING PEOPLE.

THERE'S A SAYING. "PAIN IS INEVITABLE, SUFFERING IS OPTIONAL."

PETER. FIND A PROFESSIONAL TO TALK TO. AND GOOD LUCK.

HOPE THAT HELPS.

IT DOESN'T.

X-MEN HEADQUARTERS. ALASKA.

GOTTA GO, GET GOING. SOON. SOON NOW.

MARKO, IS EVERYTHING OKAY?

NO... CYTTORAK... SCIONS... CHAMPION.

CYCLOPS. PSYLOCKE. WE GOTTA GET TO NEW YORK. ***NOW.*** THE WORLD...***EVERYONE*** IS IN DANGER.

HEH. "WE SHOULD GET TO NEW YORK." HE CAN'T BE SERIOUS.

HE IS.

AND HE ***NEVER*** SUGGESTS MISSIONS.

SHOULD WE...?

GET TO NEW YORK RIGHT AWAY? YES, SCOTT. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD.

RIGHT. I'LL GET THE JET READY.

I'LL GATHER THE OTHERS. SEE YOU IN FIVE.

I SHOULD GO, SHE DOESN'T NEED MY NONSENSE RIGHT NOW.

SPIDER.

WHY ARE YOU LINGERING OUTSIDE MY APARTMENT? AND OUT OF COSTUME!

I SAW YOU DIE, FELICIA. I SAW EVERYONE DIE. *EVERYONE.*

AND IT DID *NOTHING.* THE WORLD WENT ON.

AND... I JUST... CAN'T.

EVERYONE DIES, SPIDER. THAT'S HOW THE STORY ENDS.

YOU WON THE CHALLENGE THOUGH, RIGHT?

I DIDN'T LOSE. BUT... I LOST.

AND... I DON'T THINK THERE CAN BE A WIN. EVER.

AND... I JUST...I CAN'T KEEP DOING IT. *ANY* OF IT.

AND YOU CAME HERE. WHY?

WHEN WE FIRST MET, YOU'D ASK ME WHY I DID WHAT I DID. I ALWAYS HAD AN ANSWER.

SOMETIMES, I FELT A LITTLE STUPID AND NAIVE BACK THEN. I FEEL *REALLY* STUPID AND NAIVE NOW.

CORRECTION. I DON'T REALLY FEEL MUCH OF *ANYTHING* RIGHT NOW.

OH, PETER.

YOU HAVE TO KNOW THAT NO MATTER HOW BAD THINGS GET, THERE IS STILL *GOOD* IN THE WORLD.

I THOUGHT I UNDERSTOOD YOU HUMANS. BUT I JUDGED ALL BY YOU...AND HE IS NOT LIKE YOU.

THIS NEW CHAMPION HAS SHOWN ME HOW *LITTLE* I UNDERSTAND. HE SEEKS TO FIND COMFORT IN ONE WHOSE LOSS WILL *DESTROY* HIM...

IT'S A CONTRADICTION BEREFT OF *LOGIC.*

THAT'S HUMANITY IN A NUTSHELL AND PETER *IS* HUMANITY.

WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?

NOTHING I DIDN'T DO TO YOU. JUST... MORE OF IT.

HOW MUCH MORE?

LAST WE MET, YOU ENDURED 809,000 DEATHS.

AND PETER?

THREE MILLION. AND HE DIDN'T DROP THE SPHERE EVEN THEN.

AND AFTER BREAKING, HE CAN'T HELP BUT SEEK CONNECTION.

"AND I MUST KNOW *WHY...*"

NO ONE IN THE CRIMSON COURT HAS EVER TRAVELED BEYOND THE *CASKET.*

THEY WOULDN'T DARE LEAVE MY FATHER'S POINTLESS PROTECTIVE SHELL.

BUT I DARE. BECAUSE I FEAR *NOTHING.*

THE *BLIGHT.* THIS IS WHAT THEY FEAR? THE THREAT BEYOND THE PROTECTION OF THE CASKET? HA! A BENIGN EMPTINESS.

I, CALLIX, BEST SON OF CYTTORAK, AM HERE. SHOW ME WHAT THERE IS TO FEAR!

SHOW ME WHY MY FATHER COWERS AT THE MERE MENTION OF YOUR EXISTENCE.

JUST AS I THOUGHT. ANOTHER OF HIS POINTLESS RULES. THERE IS NOTHING HERE.

I... WHAT IS THIS? I CAN'T MOVE! WE MUST TURN BACK!

ALMOST... THERE.

MY STRENGTH WILL CARRY ME THROUGH... DO YOU HEAR THAT, FATHER? MY STRENGTH, NOT YOURS!

SO, ***THAT*** IS WHAT HE FEARS. THE LOSS OF CONTROL, THE FADING OF HIS POWER. BUT I FACED THE BLIGHT AND ***SURVIVED.***

IN FACT, I FEEL ***STRONGER*** THAN EVER BEFORE.

COME, MY CRIMSON CANINES. IT IS TIME WE HAD A CHAT...

"...WITH OUR BROTHER."

IT IS I! *CRADIOS!* PREPARE TO MEET YOUR END, YOU MISERABLE HUMAN.

I... WHERE IS HE?

WHERE IS THE *CHAMPION?* ANSWER THE CALL, COWARD!

A VICTORY WITHOUT BATTLE IS A HOLLOW ONE. WILL NO ONE *FIGHT* CRADIOS?!

WE WILL.

THE X-MEN ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE.

NEW YORK CITY. FELICIA HARDY'S APARTMENT.

COFFEE?

UH, THANKS. LOOK, ABOUT LAST NIGHT...

YEAH...I HAVE TO HEAD OUT. CAN YOU LOCK UP WHEN YOU GO?

FELICIA DOESN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT. WHICH IS FINE BY ME.

BECAUSE, FOR ONCE? I DON'T EITHER.

SURE. AND, UH... THANKS FOR LETTING ME CRASH HERE.

THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS DO, PETER.

AS SHE LEAVES ME ALONE IN THE QUIET, I HEAR A BUZZ...

...THE TINGLE OF MAGIC. ONE OF CYTTORAK'S SCIONS HAS COME TO NEW YORK...

I TRY TO CARE.

IT DOESN'T WORK.

ACROSS TOWN.

DO YOU *FOOLS* REALLY THINK YOU CAN *DEFEAT* ME SO *EASILY?*

WE NEED TO LIMIT HIS MOVEMENT SO THAT WE CAN KEEP THE FIGHT CONTAINED. THAT'S YOU ON THE PSYCHIC FRONT, ***KID OMEGA.***

TEMPER, CAN YOU ICE THE ROAD SO IT'S DIFFICULT TO FIND PURCHASE?

HOPE EVERYONE HAS CAR INSURANCE!

MAGIK, PSYLOCKE, FLANK HIM.

YOU WANT SLIPPERY? LET'S GO!

NONE OF YOU ARE *CHAMPIONS*-- THUS, YOU HAVE NO CHANCE.

YES, *KEEP TALKING*, YOU RIDICULOUS FOOL.

STOP ANNOYING ME WHILE I DESTROY YOUR WORLD.

WFFF

YEAH, NO. WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED.

HOW *AMUSING*. HUMANS ARE *WEAK* NEXT TO THE MIGHT OF *CYTTORAK* AND HIS ILK.

OH YEAH?

DO I COUNT AS ONE OF THAT ILK?!

CYTTORAK'S THRONE ROOM. CRIMSON COSMOS.

EARTH'S CHAMPION DID NOT SHOW. WILL YOU DECLARE THE *COVENANT* NULLIFIED, FATHER? OR WILL YOU LET THEM FIGHT?

"WHO ARE YOU TO CHALLENGE YOUR BETTERS?!"

THE CRUMBS OF MY FATHER'S POWER THAT YOU POSSESS DO *NOT* MAKE US KIN.

OH, THIS IS BAD.

IT COULD BE WORSE... AT LEAST NO ONE HAS DIED YET.

TEMPER, GIVE ***JUGGERNAUT*** SOME SPACE TO ***WORK.*** PSYLOCKE, MAGIK, LET'S GO HELP OUR BOY. KID, KEEP THE BYSTANDERS OUT OF THE WAY.

CYCLOPS, THIS ALL FEELS LIKE ***TRIAGE.*** DO YOU THINK WE CAN PUT HIM DOWN?

I'M OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS, PSYLOCKE.

GET BACK, EVERYONE! GO TOWARD THE F.E.A.S.T. CENTER!

HOLD THAT DOOR UNTIL EVERYONE IS IN!

A.S.T.

ON IT, MAY!

AIEEEE!

OKAY! TIME TO GET OUT OF THE BOUNCE HOUSE, KIDDOS!

BOUNCE HOUSES ARE FOR BABIES. WHO WANTS TO *FLY?*

YAY!

OH MY!

SORRY TO CRASH YOUR PARTY!

WE PREFER SURVIVAL! THANKS!

YOU ARE NO SON OF CYTTORAK. YOU ARE NO *CHAMPION!*

SHUT YOUR PIEHOLE! *THE X-MEN ARE EARTH'S CHAMPION, NOW!*

PETER. WE NEED TO TALK.

WHY? AREN'T YOU TIRED OF TELLING ME THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER?

I SHOULD NOT BE HERE, AS THERE ARE *OTHER* WORLD-ENDING PROBLEMS I NEED TO ATTEND TO, BUT I HAVE TO TELL YOU ABOUT THE BLIGHT. *NOW.*

PASS. UNSUBSCRIBE.

WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, YOU *WILL* HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE BLIGHT.

"THERE IS NO MORE TIME TO CODDLE YOU."

THE CRIMSON CHAOS.

SOMETHING HAS CHANGED... AFTER LEAVING THE PROTECTION OF THE CASKET AND CHALLENGING FATHER'S EDICT... I FEEL...SO...

WHINE

WHINE

WHAT? *NO!* WHAT IS THIS *AFFLICTION?!*

NYAH! NO, I WILL NOT--

AHHH!

ARF ARF ARF

Ohhh...

NOW I UNDERSTAND... *POWER.*

MY HOPES... MY DREAMS AND PETTY DESIRES...SUCH A WASTE OF TIME. YES, *THIS* IS TRUE STRENGTH.

THERE IS SO MUCH TO BE DONE. SO MUCH TO *CLAIM...*

COME, MY HOUNDS. WE HAVE *WORK* TO DO.

"WHEN I FIRST ENCOUNTERED THE BLIGHT, IT NEARLY DESTROYED ME. I WAS YOUNGER THEN...

"THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE WERE REVEALED TO ME, AND I WAS FILLED WITH WONDER AND AWE...

"...BUT WAS STILL NOT READY FOR THE COSMIC ENERGY KNOWN AS THE ***BLIGHT.***

"I STUDIED IT, BECAUSE THAT IS WHO I AM, BUT THE MORE I LEARNED, THE MORE I REALIZED THAT IT WAS A THREAT TO EARTH AND EVERYTHING I HOLD DEAR.

"I TRIED TO DESTROY IT, BUT IT WAS A WASTED EFFORT. THE BLIGHT IS ***ETERNAL.*** IT IS A FORCE OF NATURE, AS INEXORABLE AS SOLAR FLARES OR DEATH.

"IT EXISTS TO EXTINGUISH LIFE. IF IT WERE TO PERCEIVE HUMANITY, IT WOULD BE ***OUR END.***"

I SEARCHED FOR A WAY TO DESTROY THE BLIGHT, THROUGH *THIS* REALITY AND *OTHERS* YOU CANNOT EVEN BEGIN TO *IMAGINE*. THERE WAS ONLY ONE OPTION: THE SPELL FOR THE *CASKET*.

I REJECTED THAT SOLUTION...AT FIRST...BUT EVENTUALLY, I DID THE UNTHINKABLE.

I MADE THE BARGAIN WITH CYTTORAK THAT RESULTED IN THE *COVENANT*.

THE CASKET IS THE *ONLY* THING KEEPING THE BLIGHT FROM PERCEIVING THE EARTH AND RAINING MISERY DOWN UPON US ALL.

THE BLIGHT SEEKS TO PRUNE LIFE AND DOES SO THROUGH AN AFFLICTION KNOWN AS *SOUL ROT*, AN ENDLESS TORTURE WHERE LIVING THINGS SEEK OUT THE THINGS THEY LOVE THE MOST...

...AND *DESTROY THEM*.

PETER, THERE *ARE* THINGS WORSE THAN DEATH.

SOUL ROT-- AND THE CHAOS THE BLIGHT WOULD WREAK ON EARTH--ARE AMONG THEM.

I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, STRANGE. BUT *DOES IT MATTER?* WE SAVE PEOPLE FROM THAT, SOMETHING AS BAD OR WORSE COMES ANYWAY.

YOU NEED TO SNAP OUT OF THIS, PETER! THE X-MEN ARE BRAVE TO TAKE ON CRADIOS, BUT THEY AREN'T THE CHAMPION. YOU WERE CHOSEN. YOU AGREED. YOU WERE GIVEN *ALL* THE TOOLS YOU NEEDED.

I WISH YOU AND THE X-MEN ALL THE LUCK IN THE WORLD.

IF YOU DO NOT RETURN TO THE FIELD OF BATTLE, THE BLIGHT WILL DESTROY *EVERYTHING.*

THEY WILL *LOSE.*

YOU MAY AS WELL LEAVE TOO.

OR STAY AND KEEP UP YOUR CREEPY SURVEILLANCE. MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO ME, CYRA.

YOU ARE CERTAINLY FASCINATING, MORTAL. BUT YOU ARE NOT ALL THAT I WATCH NOW. THESE ARE TIMES *UNPARALLELED.*

"I WATCH YOUR CITY. YOUR PEOPLE.

RANDY, SHAY, WE HAVE TO GET IN THE F.E.A.S.T. CENTER! FOLLOW RICARDO.

"AND I WATCH MY BROTHER AND THOSE WHO FOOLISHLY TAKE UP *YOUR* QUEST."

HUNGH!

DO YOU YIELD?

I... YIELD.

YOU MAY HAVE WON THIS DAY, BUT--

NYAH!

FOOLISH BROTHER.

HE MAY YIELD, BUT *I* DO NOT.

NO...

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM-- COSMIC HANGNAIL?

I WATCH...

I WATCH ONE BROTHER DIE AND ANOTHER...

I, *CALLIX*, AND MY *ROT DOGS* CLAIM THE EARTH AS OUR OWN.

"...I WATCH ANOTHER SUFFER A WORSE FATE."

GO. SHOW THEM WHAT IT MEANS TO *SUFFER*.

CAIN, GO AFTER THE NEW GUY!

EVERYONE ELSE-- WE GOTTA TAKE OUT THESE...*WHATEVER* THEY ARE.

HEY! YOU'RE LATE. THE PARTY'S OVER, PAL.

Huh?

MY FATHER SEES FIT TO BESTOW HIS BEST GIFTS ON EVERYONE BUT *ME*. BUT I HAVE SOMETHING *BETTER* NOW.

OOF!

KRAAASH

YOU OKAY, CAIN?

NO ONE STOPS THE JUGGERNAUT...

STOP

DO YOU SEE THIS, FATHER?

NO. CRADIOS CAN'T BE... HE CANNOT DIE...

OH, MORTAL...

GET INSIDE, EVERYONE. GET INSIDE!

GO! GO!

F.E.A.S.T.

"...EVERYTHING JUST GOT SO MUCH WORSE."

FELICIA HARDY'S APARTMENT.

IT'S STRANGE TO SEE A *SCION OF CYTTORAK* CRY, AND WHATEVER *CYRA* SAW HAS HER SHAKEN UP...

I'M GUESSING IT'S BAD. JUST INCREDIBLY AWFUL.

AFTER EVERYTHING SHE'S SHOWN ME...I'M NOT SURE I WANT TO KNOW WHAT RISES TO THAT LEVEL.

THANKS FOR THE CHAT, BUT IF THERE'S SOMEWHERE YOU NEED TO BE...

NOT *ME*...

...YOU NEED TO SEE THIS.

HEY!

LOOK, I JUST...

F.E.A.S.T.

NO.

F.E.A.S.T.

I'M SORRY, PETER.

THEY'RE GONE.

RANDY. SHAY.

AUNT MAY...

AND SOME POOR SOUL WHO DIDN'T EVEN COMMIT THE CRIME OF KNOWING ME.

THIS ISN'T HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE. I ***SAW*** THEIR DEATHS! FELT THEM. ***THIS*** WASN'T IT.

WHAT I SHOWED YOU WAS BUT A ***POSSIBILITY.*** THINGS CHANGED.

WHAT CHANGED?

YOU REFUSED THE CALL OF CYTTORAK AND REJECTED YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS ***CHAMPION.***

SO THIS IS ***MY*** FAULT...

IT FELT LIKE NOTHING MATTERED, BUT IT *DOES*. HOW COULD I *FORGET* THAT?

EVERY DEATH I EXPERIENCED DURING CYRA'S TRIAL HURT LESS THAN THE GRIEF CLAWING AT ME NOW.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?! I'VE BEEN HAVING A PITY PARTY WHILE *LIVES* ARE AT STAKE.

REAL PATHETIC, PARKER.

I'D RATHER FAIL THAN DO *NOTHING* AT ALL!

THE REEDS...IF I GIVE YOU THE REMAINING *REEDS OF RAGGADORR*, CAN YOU BRING THEM BACK, COULSON?

I'M NEW AT THIS. I'M SURE THERE ARE *RAMIFICATIONS* FOR SUCH A DEAL...

BRING THEM BACK, COULSON!

BUT THE REEDS...

...YOUR *LAST* REEDS...

BRING THEM BACK. PREFERABLY WITHOUT THEM REMEMBERING HOW THEY DIED.

CHAMPION. WITHOUT THE REEDS, IF YOU DIE AGAIN--*WHEN* YOU DIE AGAIN--IT *WILL* BE PERMANENT.

THAT'S A CHANCE I'M WILLING TO TAKE.

DO IT, COULSON.

=GASP!=

F.E.A.S.T.

WAIT, WHAT HAPPENED?

I'M NOT SURE.

MS. PARKER...

I HAVE NO IDEA, RICARDO.

I'M SORRY I WASN'T HERE FOR YOU.

I'M SORRY I LET YOU GET HURT.

EVERYONE OKAY?

I THINK SO. BUT WHAT HAPPENED?

IT ISN'T SAFE OUT HERE. GET INSIDE THE F.E.A.S.T. BUILDING.

F.E.A.S.T.

THANK YOU, SPIDER-MAN.

ONE CRISIS HANDLED...

...ON TO THE NEXT.

SINCE YOU'RE STILL HERE, ANY IDEA HOW TO DEFEAT THESE THINGS?

NO. THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THEM THAT FEELS...CORRUPTED. ***DANGEROUS*** IN A WAY I DO NOT QUITE UNDERSTAND.

THOSE THINGS ARE CONTROLLED BY CALLIX, BUT THEY ARE NOT ***TRULY*** HIS.

I ALREADY PUT CALLIX DOWN ONCE. IS A REMATCH ALLOWED UNDER THE *COVENANT?*

THERE IS SOMETHING MORE AT PLAY, I FEAR. WE NEED TO FIND CALLIX AND ATTACK HIM DIRECTLY. HE IS THE CONDUIT FOR THE POWER I SENSE.

ON IT.

WHOA!

HEY, JUGGY. HAVE YOU SEEN A GUY WITH A BAD ATTITUDE AND AN OVERINFLATED SENSE OF SELF?

Hmph. HE SWATTED ***ME*** LIKE A FLY, AND YOU THINK ***YOU*** GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO STOP HIM?

MAYBE... WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THE ***X-MEN.***

THAT WAY. GO, WE'RE WITH YOU.

THANKS! I APPRECIATE THE ASSIST.

GLAD I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT YOU PUMMELING ME FOR ONCE.

Heh.

YOU EARTHERS TRULY DON'T KNOW WHEN TO GIVE UP.

YEAH, THOSE X-MEN ARE *ANNOYING*, RIGHT?

BUT ALSO GREAT AT HANDLING *UNINVITED GUESTS.*

LOOK, I KNOW EARTH IS AWESOME, BUT YOU NEED TO FIND A NEW VACATION SPOT.

I SUGGEST JUPITER.

I HEAR SATURN IS NICE THIS TIME OF YEAR.

SERIOUSLY, JUST PICK ANOTHER PLANET, BRO.

BECAUSE YOU'VE SERIOUSLY OVERSTAYED YOUR WELCOME.

WE'VE BEEN GIVING THIS GUY ALL WE'VE GOT. TELL ME YOU HAVE SOMETHING UP YOUR SLEEVE.

DOCTOR STRANGE TAUGHT ME A SPELL THAT I'VE BEEN SAVING JUST FOR A MOMENT LIKE THIS.

I'LL HIT HIM WITH IT--YOU GUYS FOLLOW UP WITH YOUR BEST ATTACKS.

WELCOME BACK, CHAMPION. I CANNOT DECIDE IF THIS IS AMUSING OR *PATHETIC.*

THE *INFERNAL SPEAR OF FERICAL.* STRANGE TOLD ME THAT IT WAS A *LAST-DITCH-EFFORT* SPELL, SINCE I WON'T BE ABLE TO CAST ANYTHING ELSE FOR A WHILE AFTER...

...BUT THIS SEEMS LIKE AN "EVERYTHING AND THE KITCHEN SINK" MOMENT!

STRANGE TOLD ME THAT SPELL WOULD DECIMATE ANYONE.

EVEN A SCION.

YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PAYING ATTENTION.

SCIONS ARE *YOUR* SUPERIORS, AND THE *BLIGHT* MAKES ME *THEIR* SUPERIOR IN *EVERY* WAY.

ARF ARF ARF ARF

SPEED LIMIT 50

OKAY, SO THAT COULD'VE GONE BETTER...

JUGGY, WHAT'S WRONG?

THIS ENERGY... IT'S FOUL. FEELS LIKE...

WATCH OUT!

FUTILE. ALL OF IT.

WHERE DO THESE DAMN DOGS KEEP COMING FROM?

THIS FIGHT IS OVER. YOU ALL JUST DON'T KNOW IT YET. BUT YOU WILL.

YOUR CITY? IT IS ALREADY MINE.

SNARL

ARF ARF

ARF

IT IS TIME I LEFT FOR MORE PROMISING VENTURES.

BOOM BOOM

HE JUST *EXPLODED* HIS DOGS?! WHO *DOES* THAT?

I DON'T THINK HE'S MUCH OF AN ANIMAL LOVER.

GOOD LUCK. PERHAPS I WILL RETURN ONCE I'VE CLAIMED MY FATHER'S DOMAIN.

IF *ANYTHING* REMAINS OF YOUR PLANET...

=COUGH= =COUGH=

HEY, MARKO. CATCH.

GUHHH.

WHOA! FRIENDLY FIRE.

NO...

WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE.

HEY? WHAT GIVES?

WHERE ARE WE?

A PLACE BETWEEN YOUR WORLD AND MINE. WE CANNOT HELP YOUR FRIENDS LIKE THIS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

YOUR FRIENDS. THEY...

...THEY NOW BELONG TO THE BLIGHT.

AND IT'S LIKE THIS ALL OVER THE CITY.

PEOPLE HAVE BEGUN TO DESTROY THAT WHICH THEY MOST HOLD DEAR. ***SOUL ROT,*** I HAVE HEARD IT CALLED. THE BLIGHT'S SIGNATURE.

THE FABRIC OF YOUR WORLD IS UNRAVELING. CALLIX HAS POISONED IT.

WE MUST STOP HIM. AND TO DO THAT, WE GO TO THE CRIMSON COSMOS BEFORE CALLIX CAN ABSORB THE REMAINING SCIONS AS HE DID *CRADIOS.*

NOTHING MATTERS NOW BUT STOPPING CALLIX FROM GAINING MORE POWER.

SOUL ROT. *THIS* IS WHAT TERRIFIED STRANGE.

WHY DO YOU SUDDENLY CARE ABOUT THE EARTH?

SHOULDN'T YOU BE, I DON'T KNOW... CELEBRATING?

THERE IS SOMETHING WORTHWHILE HERE. THERE IS STILL SO MUCH I DO NOT UNDERSTAND ABOUT HUMANS.

BUT I *WANT* TO.

I NEED HER HELP. I *COULDN'T* STOP CALLIX EVEN WITH THE X-MEN. AND IT SEEMS LIKE HE IS THE KEY TO STOPPING THIS.

MAYBE A LITTLE GOD MOJO IS EXACTLY WHAT I NEED.

WHAT ABOUT JUGGERNAUT?

HE IS UNAFFECTED BECAUSE HE IS MY FATHER'S PRESENCE HERE ON EARTH. HE MAY YET LIVE.

BESIDES, IF WE FAIL, EXISTENCE AS WE KNOW IT WILL END. SO HIS SUFFERING WILL BE SHORT.

I CAN'T TELL IF YOU'RE JOKING OR NOT.

WHOA. THIS LOOKS LIKE A WAR ZONE.

NO. CYRIOS. *SISTER.*

OH, CYRA. I'M SO SORRY.

ALL OF THEM, *ALL* OF MY FAMILY...

DEAD. CALLIX DID THIS. *MY BROTHER* DID THIS.

FATHER, HOW COULD YOU LET THIS...?

WHY DOES MY FATHER NOT FIGHT BACK? HE IS A *WARRIOR!*

THIS IS HIS DOMAIN.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT *EXACTLY* IS HAPPENING.

MAGIC STILL FEELS LIKE SOMETHING STRANGE AND ALIEN, EVEN AFTER ALL OF THE CHAMPION NONSENSE.

BUT IT DEFINITELY SEEMS LIKE THE BIG GUY SHOULD PUT UP MORE OF A FIGHT.

IF MY FATHER WILL NOT FIGHT, *I WILL.*

SEE IF YOU CAN ROUSE MY FATHER WHILE I FIND CALLIX.

BROTHER! WHERE DO YOU HIDE?

I CAME TO STOP YOU.

CCRRAAAAAA

I... WHAT IS HAPPENING?

HEY! CAN YOU HEAR ME? WE REALLY NEED YOU TO WAKE UP AND KNOCK SOME SENSE INTO YOUR KID.

CCRRAAAAAA

CRACCC

CHKKK

I'VE BEEN AFRAID BEFORE.

BUT THE TERROR I FEEL RIGHT NOW MAKES EVERY OTHER MOMENT PALE IN COMPARISON.

THIS IS THE BLIGHT THAT STRANGE FEARED.

HOW CAN WE FIGHT SOMETHING SO *MASSIVE*, SO POWERFUL?

YOU *DON'T.*

KNOW THIS WITH YOUR LAST BREATH: MY TRIUMPH WILL BE *COMPLETE.*

БЛДР

YOU DID YOUR BEST, KID.

TIME TO GO.

EVER SEE SOMEONE WHO OBVIOUSLY OUTGREW SOMETHING BUT HAD TO STICK WITH IT, 'CAUSE WITHOUT IT, THEY'RE NOTHING?

LIKE AN EIGHTY-YEAR-OLD *ROCK STAR* IN LEATHER PANTS PRANCING AROUND A STAGE WHEN HE OUGHTA BE PLAYING *BOCCE* AT THE REST HOME.

THAT'S HOW I FEEL TODAY.

TEMPER.
GENERATES INTENSE HEAT OR COLD.

I'M THE--

JUGGERNAUT!

MAGIK.
TELEPORTER; SORCERESS; WIELDER OF THE SOULSWORD.

THE JUGGERNAUT.
UNSTOPPABLE AVATAR OF THE DEMON/ GOD CYTTORAK.

PSYLOCKE.
PSYCHIC MARTIAL ARTIST.

CYCLOPS.
X-MEN LEADER SINCE BEFORE HE COULD DRIVE. POWERFUL OPTIC BLASTS.

KID OMEGA.
OMEGA-LEVEL TELEPATH AND TELEKINETIC.

THEY ARE THE **X-MEN**, MUTANTKIND'S GREATEST CHAMPIONS. AND THEY ARE ALL INFECTED BY **THE BLIGHT.**

YOU SEEM TO BE RESISTANT TO THE FREEING TOUCH OF ***THE BLIGHT.*** WHICH LEAVES YOU WITH TWO CHOICES.

JOIN US ***ANYWAY***--KILL, PUNISH, OR HELP US SUBSUME ANYONE WHO ***ISN'T*** ONE OF US-- OR STAND ASIDE.

WAIT, I LIE. THERE'S A THIRD CHOICE.

DIE.

HOW ABOUT *NONE 'A THE ABOVE.*

I'M THE *JUGGERNAUT,* SUMMERS. I *MAKE* THREATS, I DON'T FIELD 'EM.

WE *KNOW* WHO YOU ARE, CAIN.

WE'RE *POSSESSED,* NOT STUPID.

TEMPER'S TRYING TO MELT THE ROAD, THEN FREEZE IT. TRAP MY FEET.

AREN'T YA THOUGH?

IT'S "NOTHING CAN STOP THE JUGGERNAUT," KID.

KRRK

NOT "NOTHING BUT FROZEN ASPHALT."

BOOM

BUT IT'S ALL JUST SETUP.

MAGIK'S SOULSWORD DISRUPTS MAGIC. SPELLS, BEINGS, YOU NAME IT. ***PERMANENTLY,*** IN MOST CASES.

NOT SURE WHAT IT WOULD DO TO ***ME*** IF SHE REALLY CUT LOOSE.

WHAPP

AND I AIN'T IN A HURRY TO FIND OUT.

YOU PUNKS WANT ME TO WET MY PANTS 'CAUSE THE BLIGHT TURNED YOU ***EVIL?***

YOU'RE ***NEW*** AT IT.

I'M A DAMN ***SUPER VILLAIN.***

PUH-LEASE. YOU'RE A CROOK?

YAWN.

I WAS A *MUTANT TERRORIST...*

...IN *HIGH SCHOOL.*

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

YOU THINK THIS'LL HOLD ME? *NOTHING* CAN--

STOP THE JUGGERNAUT, WE KNOW. BUT YOU WERE *STANDING STILL* WHEN KID OMEGA IMMOBILIZED YOU.

IF YOU NEVER GOT *STARTED*, YOU CAN AT LEAST BE SLOWED DOWN.

TEAM, HIS HELMET PROTECTS HIS ONLY VULNERABLE SPOT: HIS *MIND.* REMOVE IT.

NOW THAT HE'S STANDING STILL, IT WON'T...TAKE ME...A SECOND...

HAVE I MENTIONED LATELY HOW MUCH I *LOATHE* MAGIC?

GRRNNN

HA. *THERE* WE GO!

OH, *COME ON!* HE'S GOT *ANOTHER* HELMET? WHAT'S UNDER *THAT*, A MAGIC MAN BUN?

NOT MY FIRST RODEO, KID.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

THIS IS AS CLOSE AS MY PSYCHIC KNIFE NEEDS.

OOOAAA-

I ASKED FOR THAT. HANGING OUT WITH HEROES IS MAKING ME SOFT.

DID SHE SHUT DOWN MY BRAIN? IS THIS A COMA?

WHERE THE HELL AM I?

THE CRIMSON COSMOS. DOMAIN OF CYTTORAK.

OH, *GREAT.* IS IT TOO LATE TO PICK THE COMA?

YEAH, I KNOW THAT LOOK. YOU'RE *DISAPPOINTED* IN ME, RIGHT?

LEMME GUESS WHY...

YOU MADE ME YOUR AVATAR FOR ONE REASON.

TO STRIKE *FEAR* OF THE GREAT AND POWERFUL CYTTORAK INTO EVERYONE I MEET.

BUT LATELY, I KEEP PLAYIN' *HERO.* WHICH AIN'T IN THE JOB DESCRIPTION.

SO WHEN I DO GOOD THINGS, I GET WEAKER. AND NO ONE'S SCARED 'A YOU, WHICH MAKES YOU *MAD.*

THAT ALL TRACK? YOUR GENIUS IDEA IS I SHOULD *KILL* THE X-MEN.

SHOW HOW TOUGH I AM. SHOW YOUR OLD ENEMY, *THE BLIGHT,* YOU MEAN BUSINESS.

OTHERWISE, WHAT, YOU TAKE MY POWER AWAY? OR RAMP IT WAY DOWN... *AGAIN?*

WELL, YOU GOT A POINT. IF I AIN'T THE JUGGERNAUT, I AIN'T MUCH.

SO I SAY...

...UP YOURS!

THIS WHOLE MESS IS *YOUR* FAULT!

AIN'T IT *YOUR JOB* TO KEEP THE BLIGHT IN CHECK?*

YOU ARE READING THE 8 DEATHS OF SPIDER-MAN, AREN'T YA?
--NECRO-NICK

WHAT'S *YOUR* WAY EVER ACCOMPLISHED?

YOUR AVATAR SHOULD BE UNSTOPPABLE. BUT I GOT MY BUTT WHUPPED ON THE REGULAR BY FOLKS LIKE THE X-MEN.

'CAUSE THEY HAD *FRIENDS*... AND I WAS LIKE YOU. BIG, STUPID, AND *POINTLESS!*

Y'KNOW THE ONLY TIME ANYTHING I DID MATTERED? WHEN *I* HAD FRIENDS.

SO I AIN'T ABOUT TO KILL 'EM ON YOUR SAY-SO. NOT WHEN IT SEEMS TO ME *YOU'RE* THE REASON WE'RE ALL HERE.

NOW EITHER SEND ME BACK AND LET ME HANDLE THINGS *MY* WAY...

...OR GET OFF YOUR FAT, RED BEHIND AND CLEAN UP YOUR *OWN* DAMN MESS.

NICE TRY.

Unnh!

MIGHT EVEN *WORK*, MOST TIMES.

Htt!

AHH

BOOM

FABOOOOM

NOT TODAY.

I'M IN WHAT THE *DR. STRANGE* TYPES CALL MY "PLACE OF POWER."

TONK

WAIT, I GOT THAT BACKWARD.

MY PLACE OF POWER CAME TO *ME.*

YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOICE, MARKO.

I WON'T HOLD BACK!

GOOD. 'CAUSE I KNOW IT'S A CLICHE.

I KNOW I SAY IT A LOT.

BUT TODAY IT'S *EXTRA* TRUE.

NOTHING...

...STOPS...

...THE *JUGGERNAUT.*

ALASKA.

JUGGERNAUT TO BASE. RESPOND, OVER.

BEAST TO JUGGERNAUT. MAGNETO IS WITH ME. WE HEAR YOU, CAIN.

HEY, I NEED YOU GUYS TO RESEARCH SOMETHING CALLED THE BLIGHT FOR ME.

IT'S MAGIC AND NOT FROM THIS DIMENSION. INFECTS PEOPLE AND ROTS THEIR SOUL BY TURNING 'EM AGAINST THEIR LOVED ONES.

I'M INTERESTED IN HOW TO CURE SOMEONE WHO'S GOT IT.

WE'LL GET RIGHT ON IT. HOW MANY OF OUR TEAMMATES ARE INFECTED?

ALL OF 'EM.

MAY WE REST ASSURED YOU ARE IMMUNE?

YEAH, I'M GOOD. THE PROTECTION 'A CYTTORAK'S ALL I NEED.

AIN'T NOTHIN' GETTING PAST THAT RIGHT NOW.

JUGGERNAUT OUT.

YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THE PROTECTION OF CYTTORAK.

LET'S *TAKE IT AWAY.*

AAAAGGHH!

FASCINATING.

EITHER YOU SHOULD BE POWERLESS OR IN SUCH AGONY YOU CAN'T MOVE.

BUT YOU *RESIST.*

'CAUSE...

...I'M... THE--

QUIET.

HRRRAAAGHH!

CAN YOU... *HEAR* ME, CYTTORAK?

I'M... *NOT*... GIVING UP.

GIVE ME WHATEVER POWER YOU CAN. OR DON'T. I'LL KEEP FIGHTING.

BUT I *WON'T* KILL THEM.

YOU MIGHT SEE *ENEMIES* HERE.

ALL I SEE ARE PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T GIVE UP ON ME WHEN THEY HAD *EVERY* REASON TO.

SO I'LL BE DAMNED IF I GIVE UP ON THEM.

YOU WANNA TAKE AWAY MY POWERS-- GO AHEAD.

I'LL GO DOWN AS *CAIN MARKO.*

I'LL GO DOWN *FIGHTING FOR MY FRIENDS.*

And while Cyttorak kept his own counsel, the Chroniclers of the Crimson Cosmos record that he did not withdraw his power from Cain Marko that day.

Scholars debate whether this is because Marko won Cyttorak's respect...

...or because, in Cyttorak's throne room, doing so would have no consequence.

For at Cyttorak's feet lay most of his offspring, dead at the hands of his other scion, Callix, who had brought the Blight into their home.

And beside them, the mortal remains of Spider-Man, Earth's champion, who had used the last of the mystic Reeds Of Raggadorr and had no further way to resurrect himself.

While beyond the Crimson Palace, Cyttorak's eternal enemy, having breached the barrier that had held for so long, reached hungry tendrils toward Earth.

The Blight held sway over all. --The Book of the Vishanti

CLIFF
MENDEZ

MY FATHER IS FOND OF PLAYING *GAMES.*

THIS SHOULD SHOCK ANY WHO KNOW OF *CYTTORAK* THE *IMMOVABLE...*

*...*MASTER OF THE UNFORGIVING *CRIMSON COSMOS...*

...PATRON OF THE UNSTOPPABLE *JUGGERNAUT.*

SNAP THE #$%@ OUT OF IT, X-MEN!

PERHAPS, IT'S HOW HE FINDS PLEASURE IN AN UNENDING, INEVITABLE EXISTENCE.

HE CERTAINLY DOES NOT FIND IT IN HIS CHILDREN.

TODAY, HOWEVER, MY FATHER'S GAMES HAVE TAKEN A TURN...

...AND THE DENIZENS OF *EARTH* SHALL BE THE FIRST VICTIMS OF HIS FOLLY.

BROKEN TOYS...ALL OF THEM.

FORSAKEN BY A GOD...

...LEFT TO WITHER AND *ROT* TO THE CORE OF THEIR SOULS BY AN INSATIABLE *BLIGHT*.

MY FATHER'S FOOLISH GAME... ENDS IN ***LOSS.***

INEVITABLE.

YOU ARE A FICKLE ONE, SISTER...

YOU FEIGN TO CARE ABOUT ***NOTHING,*** YET YOU CAME TO THE AID OF THIS MISERABLE HUMAN.

YOU ***HATE*** FATHER, BUT WHEN I FINALLY REBUKE HIM, YOU TAKE UP ARMS AGAINST ME.

I HAVE ***BROKEN CYTTORAK'S*** ILL-CONCEIVED ***COVENANT, FREED YOU...***YET YOUR EYES CARRY ONLY CONTEMPT.

I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO *KILL* YOU OR *MARRY* YOU.

THIS HAS GONE TOO FAR, CALLIX...THE *BLIGHT* WAS NEVER MEANT TO FIND THIS REALM--

THE *BLIGHT* IS POWER WE WERE DENIED...

...SO THAT WE WOULD REMAIN COWED IN *HIS* SHADOW. HE WAS *AFRAID* OF WHAT WE--WHAT *I*--COULD DO WITH THIS.

NO MORE.

I WILL SPEAK TO FATHER, DIRECTLY...

...AND WITH EXTREME VIGOR.

YOU HAVE UNTIL I KILL HIM TO JOIN ME.

AFTER THAT, I CANNOT VOUCH FOR YOUR SAFETY.

HE IS RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING...

...I AM *FICKLE.* UNKNOWN EVEN TO MYSELF--

NOT TO BE RUDE...

...BUT IT'S A LITTLE LATE TO DISCOVER YOUR CAPACITY TO CARE ABOUT PEOPLE, *CYRA*, SCION OF CYTTORAK.

LATE FOR *SPIDER-MAN*, AT LEAST.

SO IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE TO GET TO WORK.

THANKS TO YOUR BROTHER, I AM ABOUT TO BE... VERY, VERY, BUSY...

HONORED AVATAR OF *DEATH*, I--I KNOW THAT YOU MUST CARRY ON WITH YOUR GRIM WORK, BUT THIS IS ALL WRONG...

DO YOU SEE ME NOW, FATHER?!

"CYTTORAK IS THE MOST POWERFUL OF THE *QUINTESSENCE*...

"EVEN IF STRANGE SPEAKS TRUE AND CYTTORAK DID NOT KNOW OF THE BLIGHT...

" MY FATHER YIELDS TO *NO ONE AND NO THING.*

"WHY DOES HE NOT FIGHT BACK AGAINST MY BROTHER?"

"IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE REALLY ASKING, CYRA...?

"OR IS SOMETHING ELSE BOTHERING YOU?"

GO! GO!
WERE-- WERE WE DEAD--?
IF WE WERE DEAD, I WOULDN'T BE TERRIFIED, RANDY!
F.E.A.S.T.
PETER!
PETER WAS COMING DOWN HERE, SHAY! WE--!
I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS, MAY...I'M SORRY. WE HAVE TO FOCUS ON--
GET RID OF IT! KILL IT!
OH GOD-- WHAT ARE THEY DOING TO THAT BOY?!
STOP! WAKE UP! PLEASE!!!
WHAT...? OH GOD... HONEY?
WHY... WHY DID I WANT TO HURT OUR SON?
OH, BABY...
TRIVIAL, TEMPORARY VICTORIES ARE ALL THAT REMAIN HERE.

THIS IS FOLLY, STRANGE.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE, VICTOR! GO TO CYTTORAK AND CONVINCE HIM TO RESTORE THE CASKET--HALT THE BLIGHT IN ITS TRACKS!

YOU KNOW WE ARE BEYOND THAT.

YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME WIPE THIS CITY FROM THE EARTH WHEN THE SCION WAS VULNERABLE.

YOU SHOULD HAVE ACCEPTED THE COVENANT *YOURSELF!*

YOU DAMNED THIS PLANET--THIS *UNIVERSE!* BECAUSE YOU WERE UNWILLING TO *SUFFER.*

WATCH YOUR TONGUE--

YOU WERE SORCERER SUPREME WHEN THE BLIGHT CAME TO THIS REALM.

FAILURE IS YOURS ALONE.

DO NOT QUESTION YOUR BETTERS, STRANGE.

FSHOW WW

"UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, YOUR WORLD PROCEEDED AS EXPECTED...

"CYTTORAK SAT IN HIS THRONE, IMMOVABLE...

"YOUR BROTHER LUSTED FOR POWER HE'D NEVER HAVE...

"THE COVENANT, GAME OR NOT, BEGAN AS IT HAD MANY TIMES BEFORE..."

AND YOU DIDN'T CARE ABOUT *ANY* OF IT.

UNTIL... YOU DID.

UNTIL SPIDER-MAN... *ENDURED* THE DEATHS I SHOWED HIM--

NOT THE *DEATHS*...

THE *LIVES*.

"YOU AND YOUR FATHER ARE ESSENTIALLY *IMMORTAL*. YOU SEE CURVATURE OF THE HORIZON OF TIME.

"HE... FELT... THEM...

"HE *CARRIED* THEM..."

WRONG.

YOU'RE SO CLOSE, CYRA.

"FROM THAT DETACHED POINT OF VIEW, IT'S EASY TO BELIEVE THAT NOTHING MATTERS."

UNTIL ONE DAY, AN "INSIGNIFICANT PLAYER" ENTERS THE GAME, AND YOUR PERSPECTIVE SHIFTS.

YOUR EYES FALL FROM THE ENDLESS HORIZON AND LAND SQUARELY IN THE *NOW.*

WHAT'S HAPPENING *NOW?*

"CYTTORAK... IS NOT *IMMOVABLE...*

"HE'S... PARALYZED?

"BY... LOSS?"

BUT... HE CAN'T FEEL LOSS UNLESS--

ATTAGIRL. I KNEW YOU'D GET THERE.

"CAN'T FEEL *LOSS* UNLESS YOU HAVE FELT *LOVE*.

"LOVE FOR A FRIEND.

"LOVE FOR A PARENT.

"LOVE FOR A HERO...

"...WHO KNOWS THAT EACH OF THE TINY LIGHTS THAT ILLUMINATE THE INFINITE DARK OF THE COSMOS FOR EVEN A SINGLE HEARTBEAT...

"...IS FRAGILE AND *UNIQUE* AND BEAUTIFUL...

"...SO IT DESERVES TO BE PROTECTED.

"THAT'S WHAT YOUR FATHER IS FEELING--WHAT *YOU* ARE FEELING, CYRA.

"LOVE FOR LIFE IS THE ONLY *MEANING* THAT CAN BE FOUND IN A MEANINGLESS UNIVERSE.

"THE WEIGHT OF IT IS *UNBEARABLE* TO SOME... TO OTHERS--"

TO HIM...?

SPIDER-MAN'S *DEAD*, CYRA.

LIFE...AND THE CARE OF IT... *IS A JOB FOR THE LIVING.*

LIFE...

I WOULD STRIKE A BARGAIN!

DEATH CAN'T BARGAIN--

BUT IT CAN BE STAVED OFF, WITH *REEDS*... WITH *MAGIC*... WITH A *TRADE*...

THE POWER AND IMMORTALITY OF A SCION OF CYTTORAK...

...TO RESTORE ONE INDOMITABLE HUMAN SPIRIT.

STRANGE'S USE OF THE REEDS WAS UNORTHODOX, BUT THERE WAS PRECEDENT FOR THE PACT WITH RAGGADORR...

IT WAS BASICALLY A GIANT "#$%& YOU" FROM ONE GOD TO ANOTHER, BUT THIS--

CAN YOU DO IT?

CAN *YOU?*

THIS IS NOT A SIMPLE "TRADE"...IT'S A *SACRIFICE.*

DO IT, IF IT CAN BE DONE, REAPER.

BEFORE THE LAST DAUGHTER OF CYTTORAK IS MADE A COWARD.

OKAY... THIS MIGHT STING.

Skritchh scratch

"NAME: PETER BENJAMIN PARKER.

"CAUSE OF... *LIFE?*

"THE WILLING TRANSFER OF CRIMSON ESSENCE FROM CYRA, OFFSPRING OF THE GOD CYTTORAK, TO SUBJECT'S MORTAL FORM.

"IMMORTALITY TRADED FOR THE REMAINING DAYS OF ONE MORTAL LIFE.

"THE UNIVERSE SCREAMS, 'THIS IS NOT THE ORDER OF THINGS!' GENERALLY, THE UNIVERSE WOULD BE RIGHT...

"...BUT I'M NEW TO THE JOB.

"SURELY I'M ALLOWED A MISTAKE IN THE NAME OF LOVE.

"NOT CYRA'S FOR PETER... NOT MINE FOR HIM EITHER.

"BUT SPIDER-MAN'S LOVE FOR *US*... *ALL* OF US."

CYRA...? WHAT HAPPENED?

WHAT DID YOU DO?

I... LEARNED TO CARE...

BECAUSE OF YOU.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...

"THANK YOU" DOESN'T SEEM BIG ENOUGH.

IT ISN'T... SO DON'T SAY ANYTHING...

INSTEAD... SIMPLY *BECOME*...

BECOME WHAT YOU *MUST* TO DEFEND THAT WHICH YOU LOVE SO DEARLY AGAINST MY FAMILY'S FOLLY.

WELCOME TO THE NEW AGE, FATHER...

AN AGE OF CHANGE!

OF *ROT!*

"BECOME A *WEAPON* AND SHED THE ROLE OF *PAWN*...

OF CALLIX, THE CONQUEROR OF CYTTORAK!

"BECOME *STRENGTH* INCARNATE...

SEE ME!

"BECOME...

SEE ME AND DIE!

"...UNSTOPPABLE.

WHAT...?

"BECOME...

"...A JUGGERNAUT."

EVER SINCE A *SPIDER BITE* CHANGED THE COURSE OF MY LIFE...

...I'VE UNDERSTOOD WHAT IT'S LIKE TO FEEL *STRONG.*

BUT I HAVE NEVER FELT *UNSTOPPABLE.*

IT'S... *INTOXICATING.*

IT'S ALSO *A LIE.*

LOTS OF THINGS CAN STOP THE *SPIDER-NAUT.*

THE PAIN OF *LOSS.*

THE FEELING THAT *LIFE IS MEANINGLESS.*

GOOD OLD-FASHIONED *FEAR.*

I KNOW BECAUSE THEY STOPPED ME. I *GAVE UP.*

STRANGE...? WHAT HAS HE DONE...?

...

I'M *NEVER DOING THAT* AGAIN.

CYRA? -KOFF- HOW...?

HEY, JUGGY... THANKS FOR HOLDING THE FORT.

THE GOOD-GUY LOOK SUITS YOU.

JUST A GUY, WEBS, TRYIN' T' BE BETTER.

YOU LOOK *RIDICULOUS.*

BUT I FEEL *GREAT.*

HOW'S THE TEAM?

BETTER. YOU KNOCKED THE *ROT* RIGHT OUTTA THEM WITH THAT ENTRANCE.

CAIN...

I... I HURT YOU.

BARELY A SCRATCH-- DON'T FEEL BAD, MAGIK--

I *DON'T.* JUST WANTED IT NOTED THAT I GOT IN A GOOD SHOT.

CORRUPTED OR NOT, IT COUNTS.

LOOKING GOOD, SPIDER-NAUT.

SHE'S FINE. NOT RIGHT IN THE HEAD, BUT FINE.

WE'RE NOT DONE.

"IT'S ALL FOR NOTHING IF WE DON'T GIVE THE SON OF YOUR BOSS A SEVERE ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT."

NO ONE'S THE BOSS OF THE JUGGERNAUT.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU FEEL THAT WAY... LIKE ON A CELLULAR LEVEL.

YEAH. IT ROCKS.

Y'EVER HEARD OF A "FASTBALL SPECIAL"?

IT'S AN *X-MEN* THING.

CALLIX!

I'VE BEEN GIVEN A ***SECOND CHANCE*** TO PUT MY MONEY WHERE MY MOUTH IS AND ***FIGHT*** AGAINST THE "INEVITABLE" CORRUPTION AND DESTRUCTION OF ***EVERY SOUL ON EARTH--***

--MAYBE THIS ***DIMENSION,*** IF THE SORCERERS ARE TO BE BELIEVED.

FEELS LIKE SCREAMING IN A HURRICANE.

BUT THAT'S FINE. I'M ***NOT ALONE.***

NO ONE HERE IS GOING QUIETLY INTO ANY DARK NIGHT.

HE'S SCARED!

THROW ME AGAIN--!

NO.

YOU KICKED THE *SOUL ROT* RIGHT OUTTA EVERYONE, WEBS.

NOW WE GOT A CHANCE...

...BUT ONLY IF YOU LET US HANDLE THE *LIGHT WORK.*

CALLIX IS ANYTHING *BUT.* IF HE UNLEASHES MORE OF THAT *ROT--*

I'M *SLOW,* NOT *STUPID.* I KNOW WHAT HE CAN DO.

YOUR FIGHT IS *UP THERE.*

THE BLIGHT. IT'S... GOD, IT'S SO BIG...

I...

WORD OF ADVICE...? YOU'RE A *#@%& JUGGERNAUT.*

DON'T *THINK.* JUST *DO.*

ALWAYS WORKED FOR ME, MORE OR LESS.

THE JUGGERNAUT'S FOOTFALLS ARE ALL I HEAR FOR A SECOND...

MATCHING MY HEARTBEAT...THE WORLD SLOWS...

...AND I REALIZE THE BIG LUG IS RIGHT.

I'VE DONE ENOUGH THINKING. I KNOW WHAT THE SOLUTION IS.

NOTHING ELSE MATTERS.

THIS WAS A GOOD LIFE.

ONCE MORE, FROM THE CHEST...

TERRIBLE TREBUCHET OF TH'OGOTH!

I'M NOT GONNA MISS MAGIC AT ALL...

...BUT I *LOVE* THE STUPID NAMES OF THE SPELLS.

"HE KNOWS THAT STRIKING THE BLIGHT IS ONLY A TEMPORARY REPRIEVE..."

WITHOUT CYTTORAK HIMSELF, THE ONLY WAY TO ***RECAST*** THE CASKET WOULD BE--

MY GOD...

IS THIS WHY YOU CHOSE SPIDER-MAN?

DID...DID YOU *PLAN* FOR THIS?

THE CRIMSON COSMOS.

...

IT'S *QUIET.* IF IT WAS NOT SO *TERRIBLE*... IT WOULD BE NICE.

BUT...WE MUST SCARE THE QUIET AWAY WITH *TRUTH,* FATHER.

I HAVE TRADED MY *IMMORTALITY,* MY SHARE OF *YOUR* CRIMSON MAGICS...

...TO SPARE THE LIFE OF THE MORTAL CHAMPION SO THAT *HE* CAN SAVE THE EARTHREALM... INCLUDING *YOU--*

WHY...?

WHY... AM I...

IMMOBILIZED?

INDECISIVE...?

CONFUSED...?

I...I HAVE BEEN ASKING MYSELF THAT VERY QUESTION SINCE I MET THIS CURIOUS HUMAN.

THE *UNTHINKABLE* HAS HAPPENED. YOU HAVE *LOST* SIX OF YOUR CHILDREN...

THEIR *IMMORTALITY*, THEIR *ESSENCE* STRIPPED AWAY BY *BLIGHT* IN THE FORM OF *CALLIX*...

HUMANS CALL IT *GRIEF*.

NOTHING CAN HURT CYTTORAK!

NO!! THE GREAT CYTTORAK *DID NOTHING* AS HIS SON KILLED HIS SIBLINGS AND ATTACKED HIS FATHER!

YOU ARE *BROKEN!*

MAKE IT STOP.

I CANNOT.

THIS PAIN...IS *INEVITABLE*...

...BUT MAYBE THERE IS ONE WHO CAN HELP, IF IT IS NOT TOO LATE.

HORRIFYING AS IT IS, THE BLIGHT IS A FORCE OF NATURE.

IT EXISTS TO CULL SOULS FROM EXISTENCE...WHY?

MIGHT AS WELL ASK WHY THERE'S GRAVITY OR MUONS OR QUASARS... *IT DOESN'T MATTER.*

DR. STRANGE FIGURED OUT A WAY TO HIDE OUR ENTIRE DIMENSION FROM THIS THING--

--BUT IT TOOK THE POWER OF A ***GOD.***

I'M A KID FROM QUEENS WHO GOT A CRASH COURSE IN MAGIC ***LAST WEEK.***

BUT...WITH THE SLICE OF POWER I GOT FROM A GOD'S ***DAUGHTER...***

...I THINK I CAN MAKE IT WORK.

I ***CAN*** CAST THE CASKET OF CYTTORAK...

...CONTINUOUSLY...

...UNTIL I ***DIE--***

FAILURE IS ***INEVITABLE...***

MAYBE NOT TODAY...

WITH THE POWER OF MY BLOOD COURSING THROUGH YOU, YOU CAN LIVE A *HUNDRED YEARS*...

...BUT *THE BLIGHT* IS PART OF THE PRIMAL FABRIC OF THE UNIVERSE.

IT WILL *PREVAIL*... EVENTUALLY.

I KNOW, MR. CYTTORAK, YOUR HONOR OR WHATEVER, BUT I'M CASTING THE SPELL ANYWAY, SO IF YOU'RE NOT PART OF THE SOLUTION--

THE BLIGHT WILL PREVAIL.

WHY DO YOU FIGHT?

WHY...WHEN...

...WHEN LIFE IS SO *FRAGILE?*

DESPITE THE MAGICAL CRAZINESS OF THE LAST FEW DAYS... THIS IS THE *ONLY LIFE I HAVE.*

MOST OF THE TIME, IT'S *HARD*... IT'S NOT *FAIR.* SOMETIMES IT FLAT-OUT *SUCKS.*

BUT IT'S *MY LIFE*...THERE'S NOT ANOTHER ONE LIKE IT *ANYWHERE.*

IT'S *BEAUTIFUL* EXACTLY *BECAUSE* IT IS SO FRAGILE.

EVERY LIFE IS LIKE THAT.

EVEN IF IN A THOUSAND YEARS, MY LIFE AND ANYTHING I EVER DID WON'T MATTER...

...IT MATTERS *TODAY.*

TODAY IS WORTH *FIGHTING* FOR.

WITH A VIEW TO THE HORIZON OF INFINITY, I DON'T *EXPECT* YOU TO UNDERSTAND, CYTTORAK.

AND I DON'T *CARE.*

I'M ALIVE. I'M FIGHTING.

JUST LIKE EVERYONE--

A Reading from the Book of the Vishanti...

Earth's Champion recalls that day and the words of the immovable god Cyttorak...

"I...hurt," he said.

"And I see no end to that pain...

"...but if you can act in the face of loss...of your insignificance and fragility...

"...so can Cyttorak.

"I will become the crimson casket that shields this world... this dimension...from the horror of Blight.

"I will protect my remaining children... flawed as they are... and this world.

"This is the new covenant...

"Not forged on a whim...

"...not even forged by my own will...

"...I make this pledge because I grieve...

"...and I fear that without action, grief is all that will remain."

On this day, Doom, Sorcerer Supreme, taught a god what it means to live...

...and forged the barrier that would forever shield our universe from the Blight.

VOOP!

EASY, SPIDER-MAN... I'VE GOT YOU...

IT'S DONE...?

YES. I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT YES...

CALLIX--?

TOLDJA. DOIN' WHAT YOU WANT WORKS EVERY TIME.

I'LL SEE THE IDIOT HOME--HE WON'T BE BACK.

THANKS... ALL OF YOU.

WHAT'S A LITTLE ARMAGEDDON BETWEEN FRIENDS?

I NEVER WANT TO DO MAGIC EVER AGAIN...

NOT EVEN AT A KID'S PARTY...

NEVER.

FAIR ENOUGH.

"KENNETH McCARRY SPENT HIS DAYS FIFTY STORIES ABOVE THE GROUND WASHING THE GRIME OF THIS CITY OFF WINDOWS..."

...SO THAT OTHERS COULD HAVE A BRIGHTER VIEW OF THE WORLD.

IT WAS ALSO HOW HE LIVED HIS LIFE.

SO MANY OF YOU SHARED BEAUTIFUL STORIES OF HOW KENNY MADE YOUR LIVES BRIGHTER...

LEAVING SURPRISE MESSAGES ON YOUR OFFICE WINDOWS...

SHARING HIS KIND WISDOM WITH MULTIPLE GENERATIONS OF SCOUTS...

OR JUST HELPING OUT AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD. A MAN YOU COULD DEPEND ON... A FRIEND.

THIS IS SAD.

YEAH, BUT...JUST LISTEN, BAILEY...

AND I WANT YOU TO HEAR ME--REALLY *HEAR ME* ON THIS...

...KENNY'S PASSING, THOUGH UNEXPECTED AND TOO SOON... WILL NOT DEFINE HIS LIFE.

"THE LOVE HE SHARED WITH HIS *FAMILY*...

I WASN'T MY BEST SELF, AUNT MAY, AND I TOOK IT OUT ON YOU...

I'M *SORRY.* AND I HOPE YOU'LL FORGIVE--

THANK YOU, MAY.

"THE CARE HE SHOWED HIS *FRIENDS*...

I KNOW THAT AN *APOLOGY* ISN'T EXACTLY RIGHT, AND NEITHER IS *"THANK YOU."*

I JUST DON'T WANT IT TO BE *AWKWARD.*

WE'RE BOTH *ADULTS,* PETER...

WELL, *ONE* OF US IS.

JUST PROMISE TO KEEP *EMO* PETER AT *BAY... NO ONE* LIKES EMO PETER.

AND DON'T GET ME STARTED ON *DANCING* EMO PETER...

HEH. THANKS, *FELICIA.*

"THE COMPILATION OF ALL THE *KINDNESSES* HE SHARED WITH THE WORLD...

WE CAN *TAKE THE UNIVERSE!*

DON'T DO THIS!

WHY NOT...?

YOU FINALLY GET WHAT YOU WANTED...FATHER'S *THRONE.*

"THESE ARE THE SMALL BUT *INDELIBLE* MARKS A MAN LEAVES ON THE WORLD.

"A LASTING MESSAGE WE CARRY IN OUR HEARTS...

YOU DID A GREAT JOB, RANDY.

THANK YOU FOR ALL THIS.

THAT'S THE FIRST TIME AND LAST TIME I THINK I'LL EVER BE THANKED FOR A *DISASTER.*

CAN'T BELIEVE I BARELY SURVIVED A CRAZY *VILLAIN ATTACK* THREE DAYS AGO JUST TO DIE OF *EMBARRASSMENT.*

NO ONE IS GOING TO BUY ANYTHING!

THE ONLY PEOPLE HERE ARE YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

YEAH...

PRETTY COOL.

YEAH, SURE... *YOU* DIDN'T FRONT ANY CASH FOR THIS...

PETER...

SHAY...

HEY, I JUST... I WANTED TO SHOW MY FACE AND... WHATEVER--

I'M GLAD YOU DID... SO I CAN APOLOGIZE IN PERSON.

I WAS IN A BAD PLACE, AND THAT'S NOT AN EXCUSE FOR HOW I BEHAVED... BUT I WANTED YOU TO KNOW I GOT TO THE OTHER SIDE.

WELL, WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT PAIN VERSUS SUFFERING... HELPED A LOT...

LIFE ON LIFE'S TERMS.

AND IF MAYBE, LIFE DECIDES THAT I CAN CALL YOU AND TRY AGAIN...?

WELL... I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT...

YOU'RE GONNA *NEED* A NURSE AFTER THE *BEATING* YOU'RE GONNA TAKE AFTER THIS SHOW.

OUCH, YOU'RE *KILLING ME...*

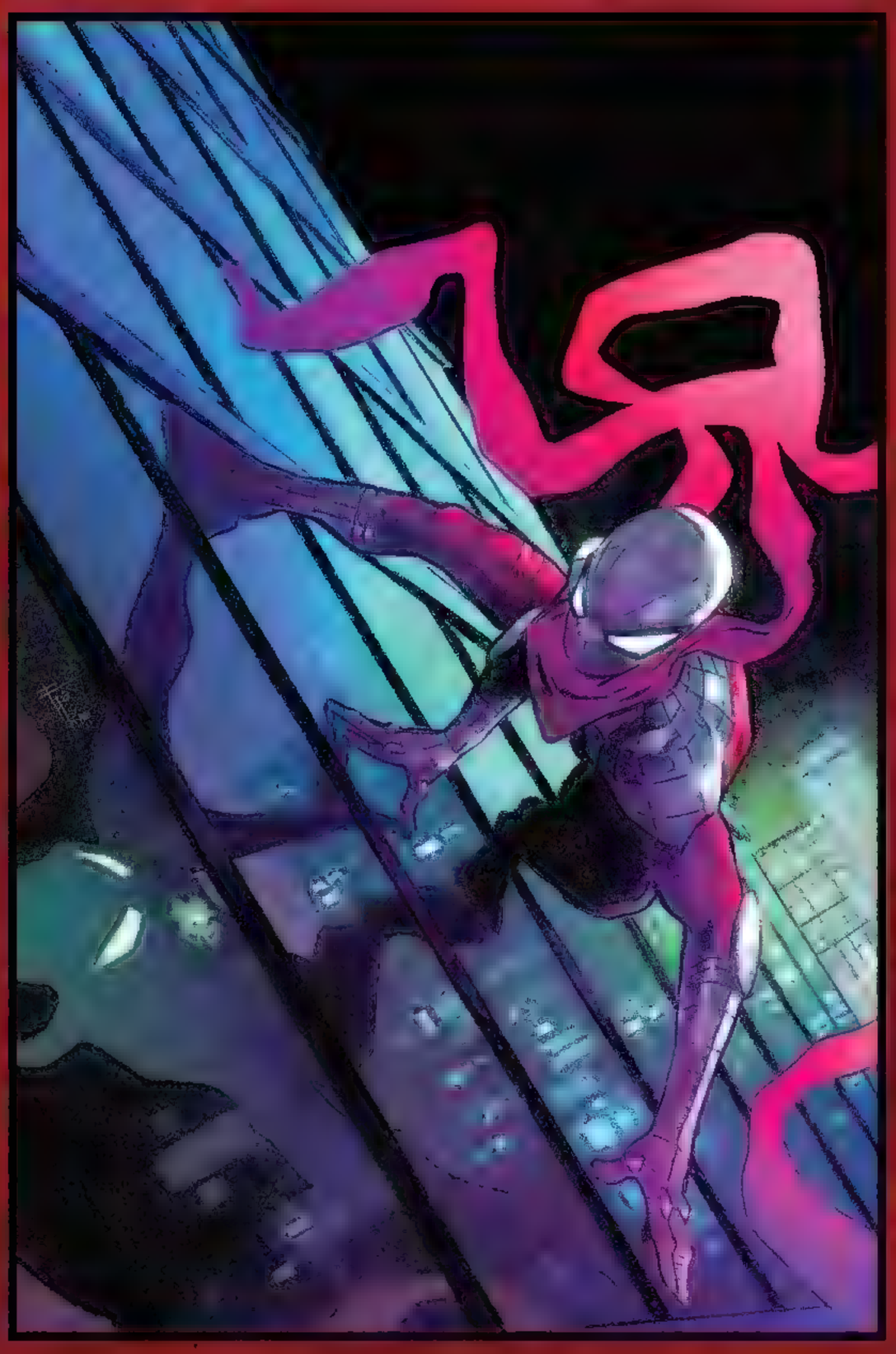
KEEP GOING.

"I WAS *HERE.* I WAS *LOVED.*

"MY LIFE MATTERED."

THE END.

#61 Variant by Simone Bianchi



Francesco Mobili & Frank D'Armata

Rafael Albuquerque

Stonehouse

Elizabeth Torque

#8 Deaths Variant by Carlo Pagulayan & Romulo Fajardo Jr.

#66 Variant by Kaare Andrews

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Aka

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Federico Vicentini & Richard Isanove

Ben Harvey

#70 Variant by Björn Barends

#10 Variant by Frank Miller & Alex Sinclair

#70 Kimono Variant by Peach Momoko

#70 Foreshadow Variant by Iban Coello & Jesus Aburtov

#65 The Thing! Variant
Aaron Kuder & Paul Mounts

#66 [illegible]
Alex Saviuk & Rachelle Rosenberg

#65 Fantastic Four Homage Variant by
Luciano Vecchio

#66 Fantastic Four Homage Variant by
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Rogê Antônio & Marcelo Maiolo

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#6 | 8 Deaths of Spider-Man Variant by Skottie Young

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#67 1:25 Deaths of Spider-Man Variant | Skottie Young

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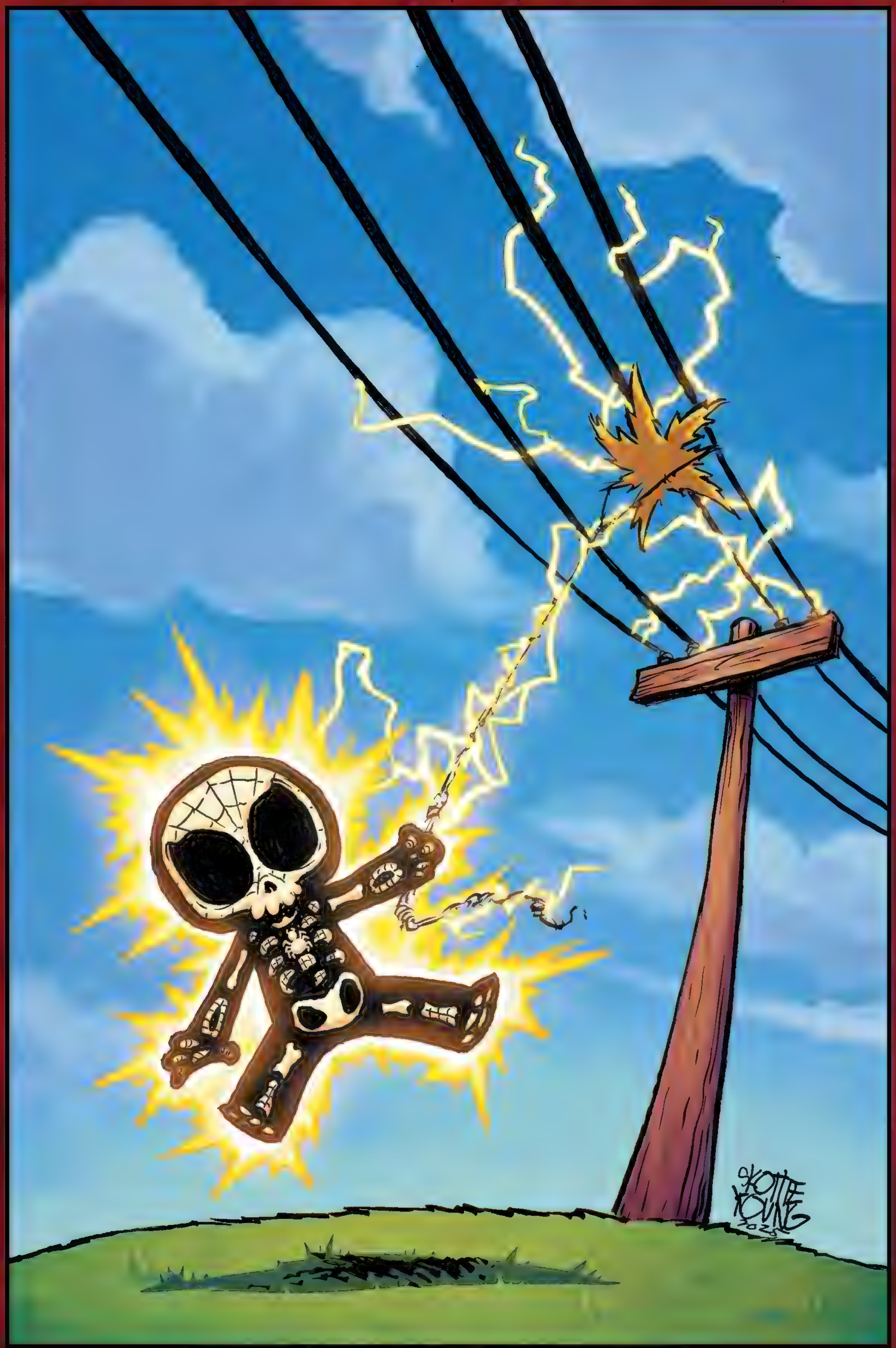

#69 8 Deaths of Spider-Man Variant by Skottie Young

#70 8 Deaths of Spider-Man Variant by **Skottie Young**

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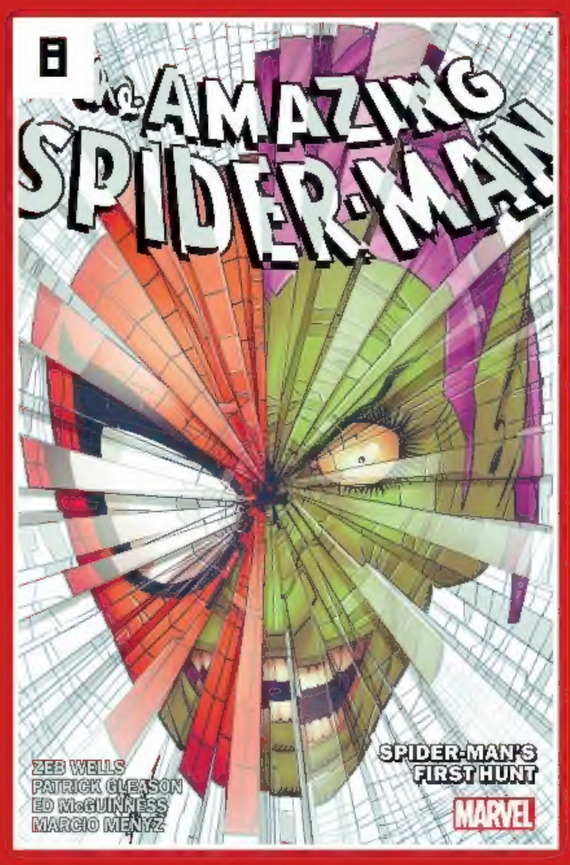

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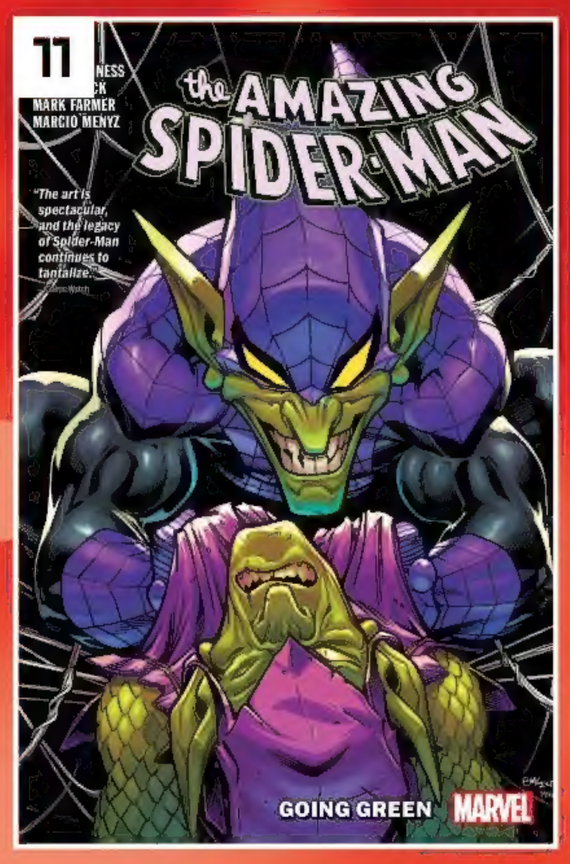

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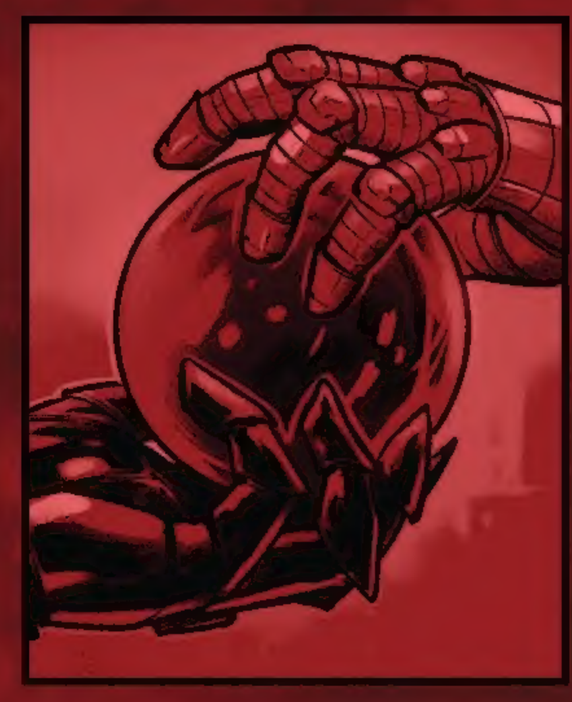

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